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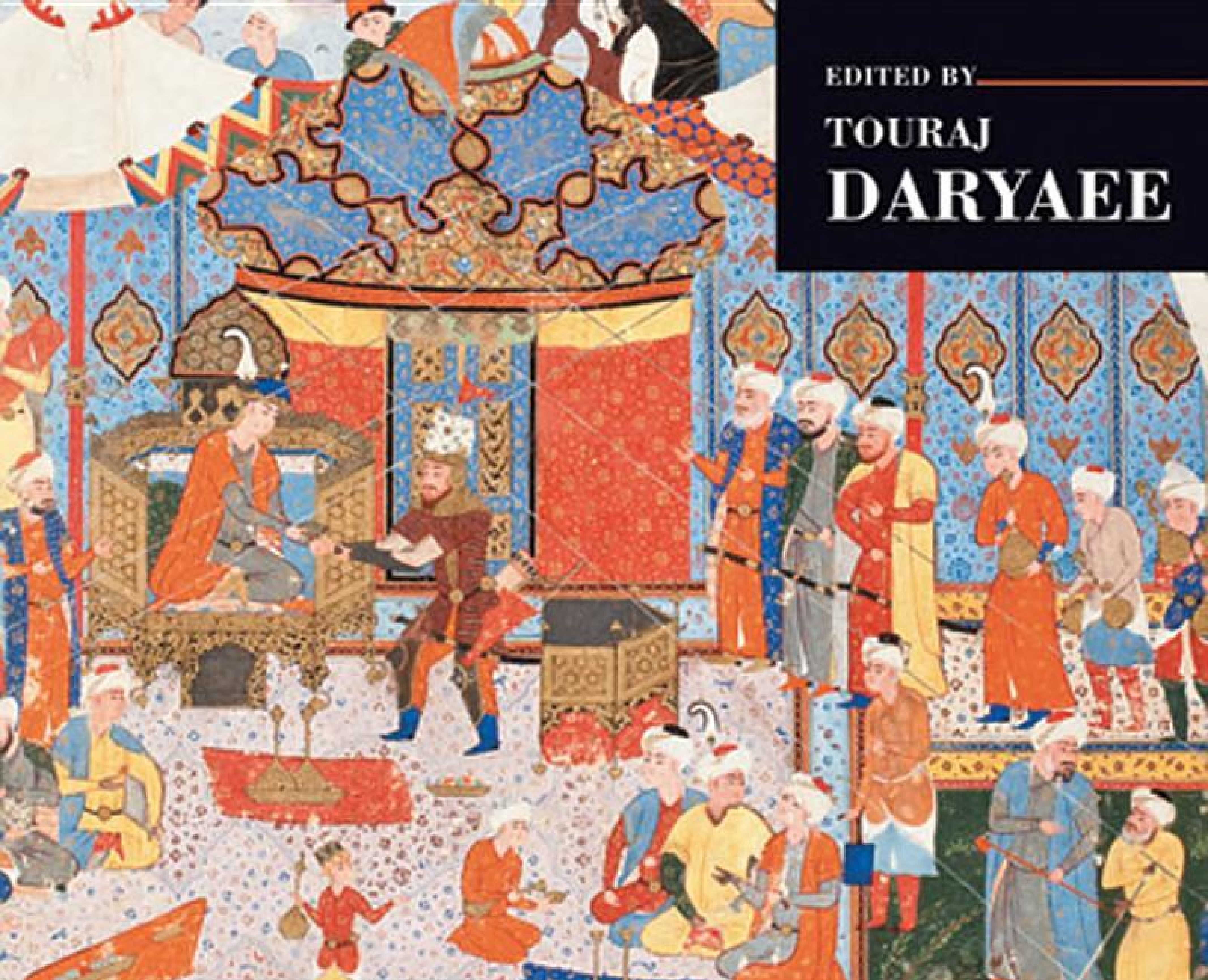

The Oxford Handbook *of* IRANIAN HISTORY

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Daniel T. Potts's research interests center on cultural developments in Iran, Mesopotamia, and the Arabian peninsula. Professor Potts's fieldwork has been mainly conducted in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, and the

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experience working on multiperiod sites has meant that his interests extend, chronologically, from the Neolithic to the Islamic conquest. He is fascinated by Near Eastern religious traditions and the problems of understanding them, particularly in situations where different cultures overlap or collide, as happened during the Achaemenid Persian, Macedonian, Parthian, and Sasanian periods; he is also extremely interested in using cuneiform sources to understand ancient economies, as an adjunct to archaeological approaches.

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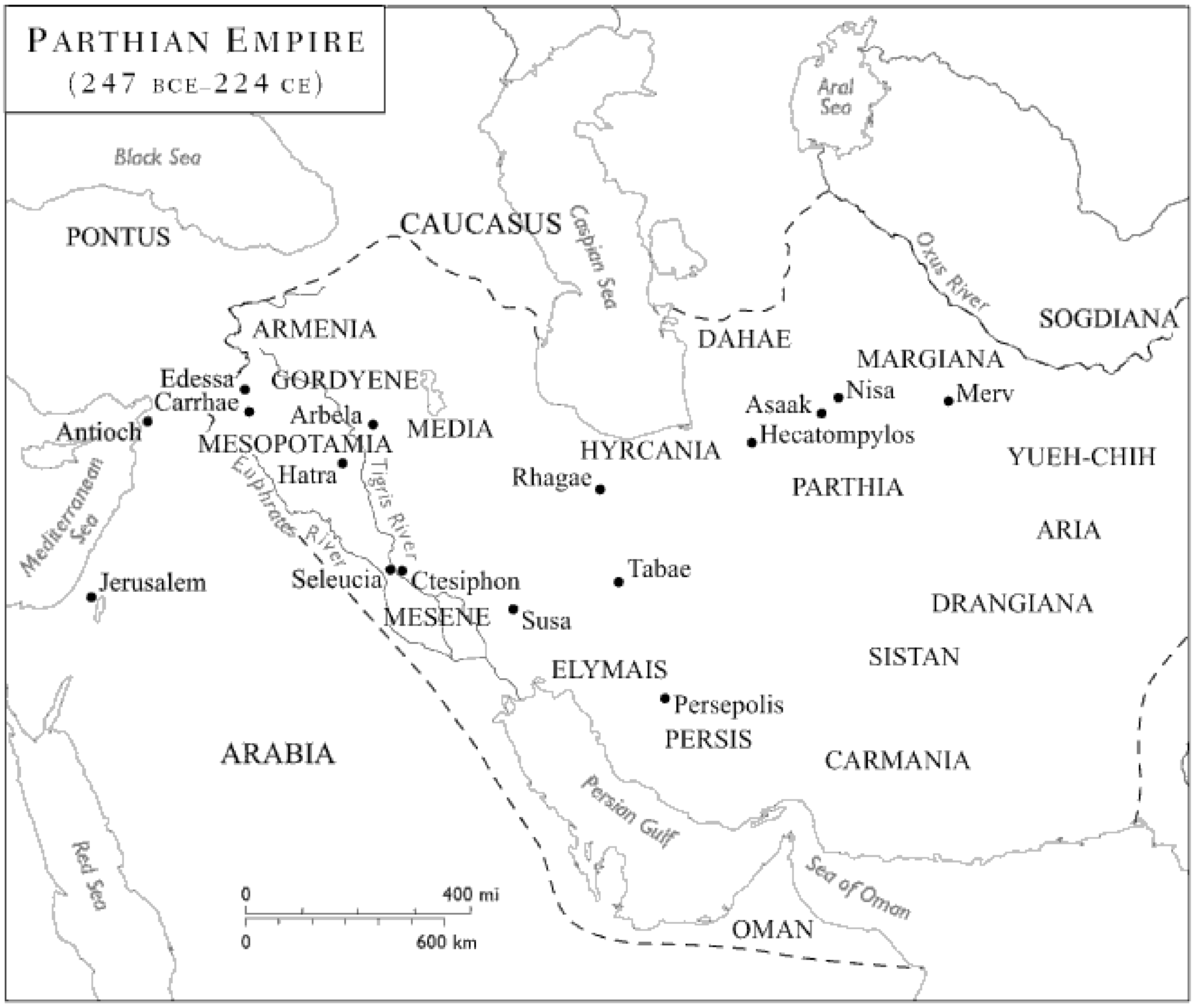

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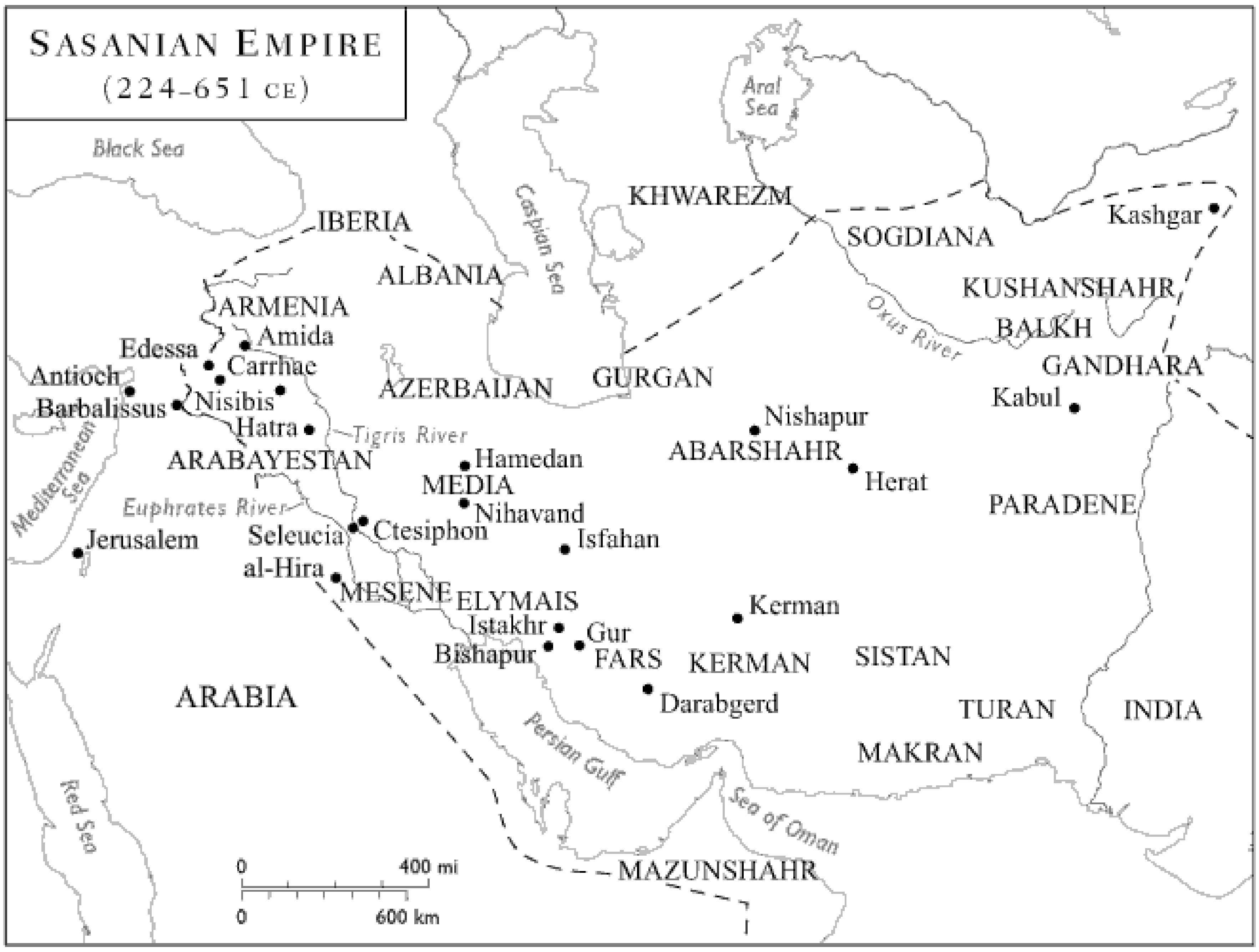

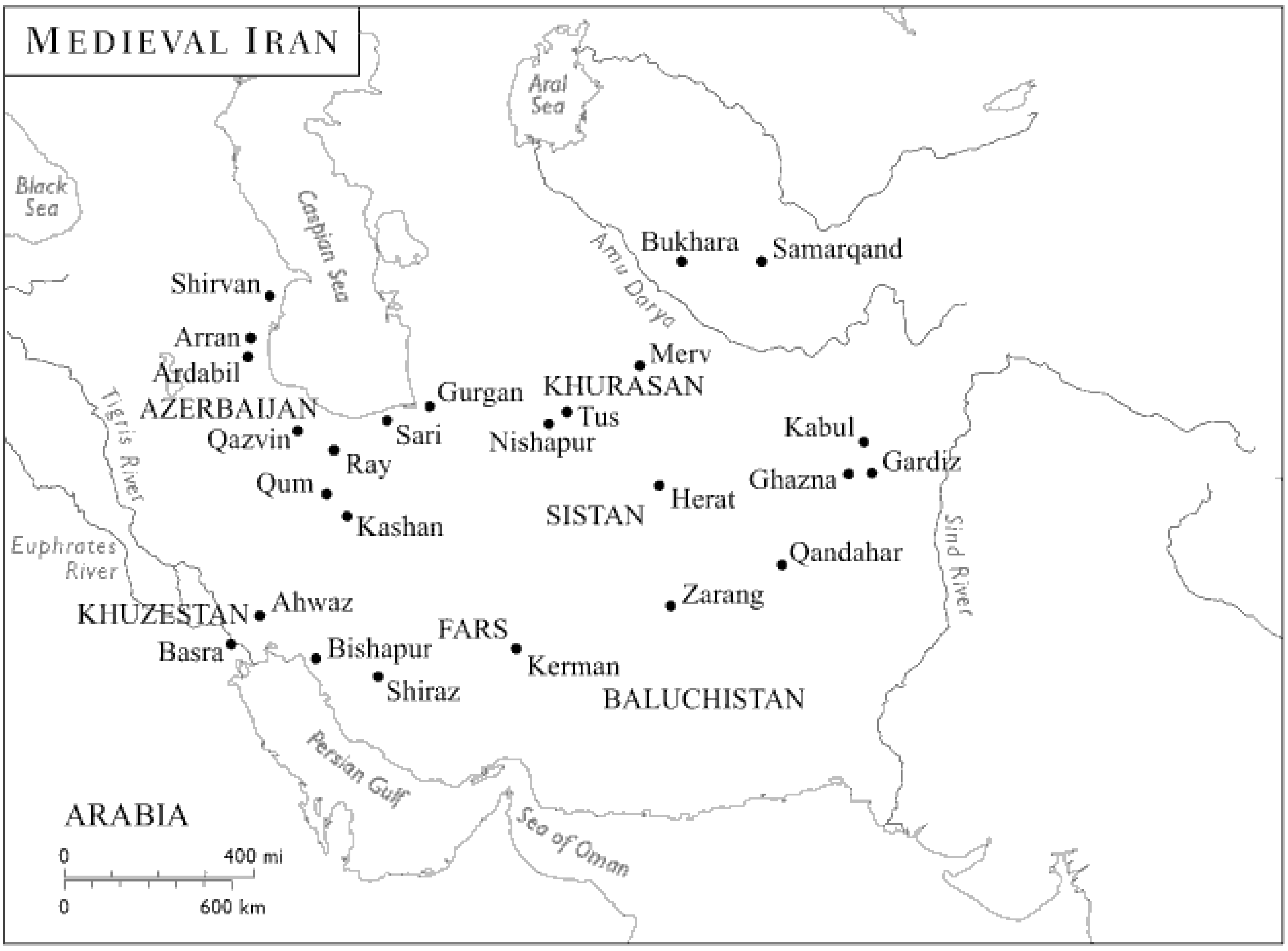

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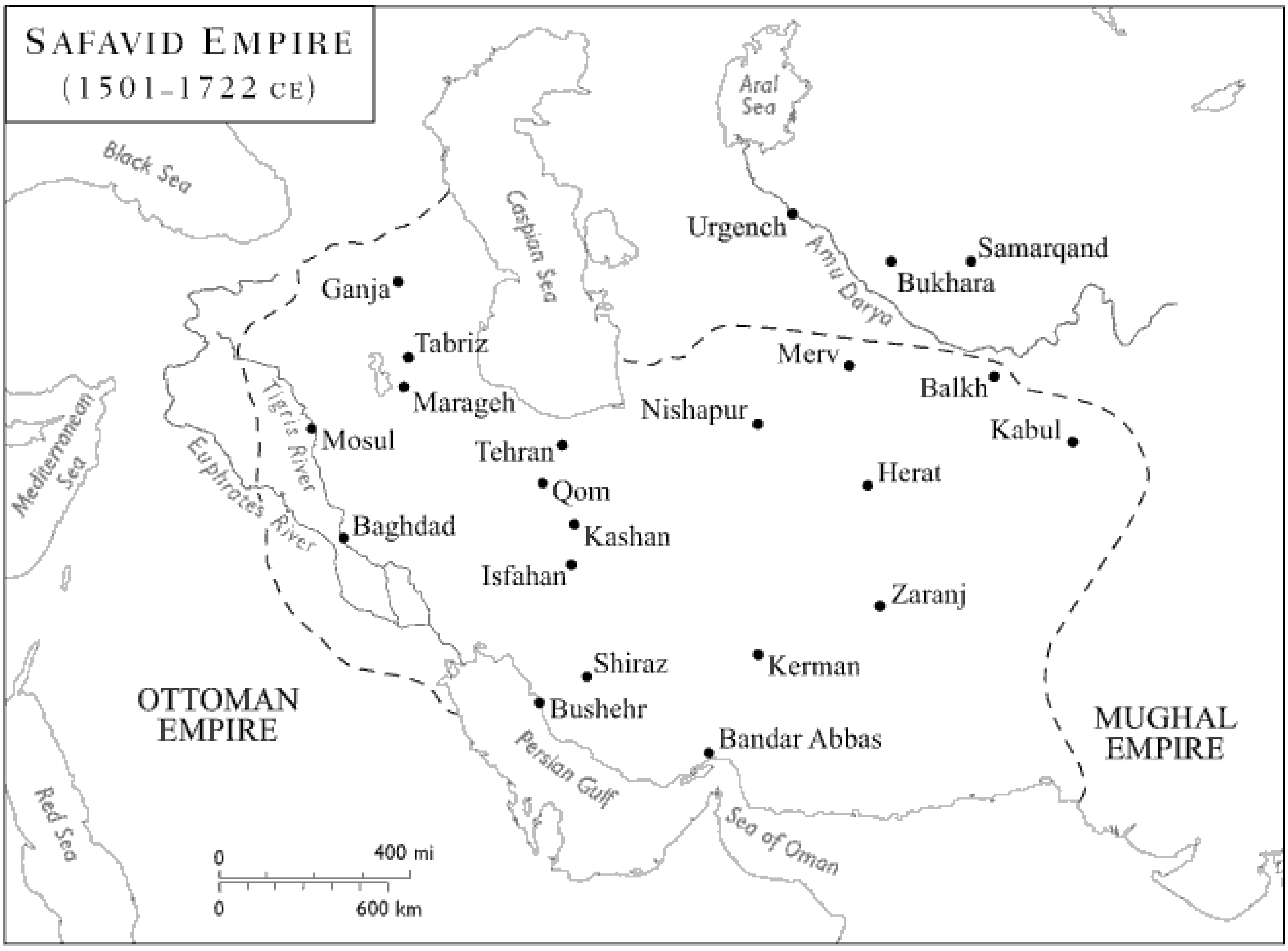

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INTRODUCTION

TOURAJ DARYAEE

IRAN is a nation-state that until the early twentieth century was known to the world as Persia. In the West, the name Persia often invokes images of a world imbued with mystery, decadence, and luxury, images that persist from the time of classical Greek authors to that of the Victorian travelers. Persian carpets, Persian cats, and Iranian caviar, among other commodities, are images associated with Persians and Iran. Today, Iran is viewed as the paragon of defiance against the West and imperialism and as the defender of the Muslim world and the Palestinians in the face of threats and sanctions. But these are only glimpses of a civilization with a long and complicated history that has captivated and perplexed ancient and modern observers alike. It is for this reason that a history of Iran is of interest and value for the English-speaking world.

According to the Christian tradition, three Zoroastrian magi, the priests of the ancient Persian religion, followed the stars to find Jesus in Bethlehem, far away from their fire-temples. The magi, with their fire-temples and their art of seeing into the unknown, were described by writers from Herodotus to Marco Polo. The establishment of the largest empire in antiquity, one of the most benevolent of any in world history, if any empire is good, is associated with the Persians. Its founder, Cyrus the Great, changed the map of the world and brought the Afro-Asiatic world together for the first time in history. His successors created the first world-scale political system, bringing the three ancient hydraulic systems, the civilizations of the Indus, the Nile, and Mesopotamia, into one orbit. Cyrus the Great's own testament, the Cyrus Cylinder, is special among the records of world conquerors, proclaiming peace and justice among the different ethnic and religious communities under his firm rule. That is why he is remembered so fondly in the Old Testament as the "anointed" one by no less than God himself, and why Xenophon chose him as the subject of the first biography in Greek.

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Art and ideas brought by the Iranians to the ancient world spread from the Islamic world to the Christian West. During late antiquity, Iranians introduced their favorite sport, polo, to the world. This game of the nobility, along with the board game backgammon, was a means of education and physical preparation for Iranians in antiquity. Other cultural products included chess, its rules changed by the Iranians to make it as it is currently played, and one of the earliest visual attestations of jousting, from the third century CE. The gilded dishes from late antique Iran demonstrate the favorite activities of the court and nobility, especially the ruler, who in the Iranian world was called the "King of Kings" (Middle Persian *shāhān shāh*). These activities were in a sense the culmination of Persian *paideia*, or, as it is known in Persian, *farhang* ("culture"). Thus, an Iranian had to be sound and balanced in both mind and body in order to be considered a cultured and complete individual. Once he acquired these arts, to use a term from the later Islamic Sufi tradition, he had become a "perfected human" (in Persian, *ensān-e kāmel*).

Politically, Iranians were viewed with awe and fear throughout the ancient world, mainly due to the fact that the Greek city-states fought for independence from the Persians as well as one another. Persians, as the Greeks knew them then, were ruled by a king who represented the epitome of absolute monarchy. These kings lived in fabulous palaces, ate sumptuously, ruled over innumerable armies, and controlled half of the world. The ancient Iranians, from Cyrus the Great to Xerxes, were known and remembered in ancient literature for different reasons. Whereas Xerxes was vilified for his attempt to conquer Hellas, Xenophon made Cyrus the subject of the first Greek biography, the *Cyropaedia* or "Education of Cyrus." In a sense, Cyrus the Great became that emulated *ensān-e kāmel*, that perfect man for the ancients, Greeks and Iranians alike. Alexander the Great's conquest of the Achaemenid Persian Empire brought initial devastation and then destruction to the famous Iranian capital, Persepolis. But a later consequence was the mingling of Greeks and Iranians in the Hellenistic period. To use the statement of the Achaemenid scholar Pierre Briant, Alexander was only the last of the Achaemenids.

These clashes, remembered and studied, also helped create the idea in post-Renaissance Europe of the conflict of modern West versus the East or the Orient. On one side stands the West with its ancestors, the Greeks, facing the East with its ancestors, the Persians/Iranians. This binary opposition and cultural heritage is more a creation of modern Western tradition than a reality, as Greeks and Iranians interacted with each other much more than the Germans or the English did with the Greeks. In a sense, the Iranians and Greeks are part of the same cultural orbit and are the inheritors of the same cultural milieu. In the medieval period, more Iranians studied, worked, and wrote commentaries on Aristotelian and Platonic texts than did all the scholars in Europe.

In the second century BCE, the Arsacids were responsible for the creation of the Silk Road trade. The Achaemenid Persian Empire had already created a Royal Road 1,600 miles long, connecting the Iranian Plateau to Central Asia and the Mediterranean. In 115 BCE, during the rule of the Arsacids king Mithradates II, the Chinese ambassadors sent by the Emperor Wudi came to his court. They concluded a treaty whereby commodities would pass to and through Iran. Thus Chinese, Iranian, and Roman orbits of power became the main actors in the premodern Eurasian economy, which came into being with the Sino-Iranian treaty.

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The Romans, during their imperialistic adventures in the Near East, came face to face with the Iranian Arsacids. In 53 BCE, at the Battle of Carrhae, the Arsacids humiliated the once invincible Roman forces. The Romans were never really able to subdue the Parthian Empire and had to acknowledge its might. They also borrowed Iranian ideas via Armenia in the form of Mithraism. The Mithraic initiation ceremony, with its philosophical and soteriological aspects, had its origins in Zoroastrianism. The Romans adopted and adapted the tradition, and the "Persian religion," as the Romans called it, became widespread in Europe and the Mediterranean region until Christianity won out in the fifth century CE.

In the third century CE, with the coming of the new Sasanian dynasty to power, Iran became the single most powerful empire in the region. Between 240 and 270 CE, Shapur I brought the Roman Empire to its knees by capturing one Roman emperor, killing another, and making a third a tributary. Shapur II in the fourth century CE repeated the victories of a century before; he defeated the Romans and caused the death of their general/emperor, Julian the Apostate. In the sixth and seventh centuries CE, two kings named Khosrow ruled over one of the most opulent empires and one of the largest cities, Ctesiphon, in late antiquity. We can understand the Iranian mentality and worldview through a story about the Persian king and his throne room. The Iranians had placed three ceremonial thrones in their palace at Ctesiphon, for the Roman, Turkic, and Chinese rulers. The Persian king sat on a larger throne as a symbolic gesture of his superiority. It is the wars of King Khosrow II and Emperor Heraclius that ushered in the decline of the Byzantine and the fall of the Sasanian Empire and thus the end of antiquity. The Muslims were then able to easily sweep through Southwest Asia and the eastern Mediterranean to face and then decimate the two superpowers of late antiquity. It is noteworthy that Iranians themselves, particularly their cavalry, joined the conquerors and were responsible for Islam's victory in the Afro-Asiatic world in the seventh and eighth centuries CE. With this event, the world of ancient Iran changed deeply in political, social, and religious ways, and Iran thus became part of the larger Muslim domain.

The word *Iran* and the idea it represents originally came from the mythical homeland of the Aryans. In the sacred text of the Zoroastrians, the *Avesta*, specifically the hymns dedicated to Yazatas, or those worthy of having sacrifices made to them, we find heroes and kings offering sacrifices so they can rule over what is known as the "Expanse of the Aryans." In the Avestan language, the place is known as *Aryana Vaējah*, which by the Sasanian period came to be called *Iran-Vej* in Middle Persian. In the *Avesta*, we also come across the geographical designation of *Airyanam Dahyunam*, "Aryan (or Iranian) lands," which appear to have been the eastern part of the greater Iranian world, what is today Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. In late antiquity we first encounter another term, *Ērānshahr,* now associated specifically with the plateau. *Ērānshahr* meant "the Land of the Iranians," and finally, by the sixth and seventh centuries, the truncated form, *Ērān* (Iran), is identified with the Sasanian Empire. This means that the Sasanians used the traditions of their ancient religion to name the territory that they were dominating. Not only was Iran set with a boundary and defensive walls at its four corners, but cultural mores and values became associated with the idea of being Iranian. In Middle Persian literature, we

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encounter the idea of people having an "Iranian disposition" and an "Iranian attitude" that was initially shaped by Zoroastrianism. But by the sixth and seventh centuries CE, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians alike identified with Iran and being Iranian.

With the Muslim conquest in the seventh century CE, Iran became part of a larger realm, that of *Dar al-Islam*. Two centuries later, Islam as a religion and culture had become an important characteristic of much of the population on the Iranian Plateau. It is important to note that Iranians themselves were the chief contributors to the cultural development of Islam outside of the Arabian peninsula, even though there are Persian words in the Qur'an that suggest an influence within Arabia as well. The Iranians were able to spread Islam as a religion and culture in a manner that surpassed its initial message, a fact that has captured the imagination of the non-Muslim world. To use Marshall G. S. Hodgson's terminology, the Perso-Islamicate world still demonstrated its Iranian values and ideas, much of it from its encounter with the Arabs and much from its own cultural past. By the eleventh century, the Persian language emerged as the main vehicle for the spread of Islam in the East. As evidence, one can point out that one of the most important Persian books to be composed in rhyme in the eleventh century came not from the province of Fars in southwestern Iran, but rather from the province of Khorasan in the northeast. The *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi has been considered a masterpiece of the Persian language for the past thousand years. The *Shahnameh*, or *Book of Kings*, retells the stories of ancient Iranian kings and the beliefs, ideals, and values of the Iranians. Copyists and storytellers made sure that the *Book of Kings* survived and in many ways became the badge of identity for the Iranians. The early independent dynasties of Iran in between the tenth and thirteenth centuries CE, namely the Samanids, Buyids, Ghaznavids, and Seljuks, regardless of whether they were Turkish, Arab, or Persian, promoted the book, learned from it, and practiced its lessons.

By the ninth century, Iran was nominally under the rule of the caliph, but in effect was broken up into kingdoms ruled by local Persian, and then Turkish, overlords. The new immigrants from the steppes, the Turks, first entered as soldiers and slaves, but eventually became the shahs and sultans of Iran. The Iranian-speaking Buyids and Samanids gave way to Turkish Ghaznavids, Seljuks, and Khwarazmshahs from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. Still, the Iranian language and Iranian values and identity were so strong that the newcomers were fully absorbed into them and adopted the idea of being Iranian. In fact, Persian culture and humanism came hand in hand to produce a new age of learning for the Middle East and the world.

Between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, the Iranian world reached its zenith in science, philosophy, poetry, and humanism. Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarazmi in eastern Iran brought forth the idea of algebra and decimal points. The word *algorithm* itself in fact derives from the name al-Khwarazmi. Zakariya Razi (Latin *Alrhazes*), born in the late ninth century in Ray, close to modern Tehran, became known as one of the most important physicians of his time. He established hospitals and correctly diagnosed diseases such as smallpox and measles, as well as distilling

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and "discovering" medical alcohol. In the tenth century, Abu Nasr Farabi wrote the single most important text on the theory of music and was known in the West as one of the greatest philosophers of the East and the major commentator on Aristotle.

In the eleventh century, the polymath Abu Rayhan Biruni, who took an interest in every scientific field, including geography and history, lived in greater Khorasan. In the twelfth century, Omar Khayyam, who came from the same region as Biruni, wrote the most important mathematical treatise in the Islamic world on algebra. Khayyam was also a philosopher and in a way an agnostic, or, as some have claimed, an atheist. This fact becomes evident in his poetry, which in the Persianate world did not receive due attention. It was the British savant Edward FitzGerald in the nineteenth century who made Khayyam's poetry renowned in the West and established his status as one of the great poets of the Islamic world. In the past century, though, Khayyam has also become respected in this regard in Iran. He was the main conduit for the transfer of Indian science to the West, through his own work and commentaries. The thirteenth-century philosopher and astronomer Naser al-Din Tusi is noted for his scientific ability and the establishment of an important observatory at Maragheh. These were some of the important thinkers who made medieval Iran the locus of a golden age of science and humanism, an age unmatched until modern times.

While nomadic invasion from the southeast had ended the pre-Muslim era, the nomadic invasion from the steppes in the northeast also brought new conquerors. The Mongols brought about a new phase in Iran's social, economic, and political history. In addition to the earlier sedentary, agricultural economy, the pastoral way of life took hold in Iran. A steady deforestation and devastation of the land, along with the loss of libraries and the death of scholars and men of letters, drove the Iranian realm into a state of underdevelopment from which it was really never able to recover. The Mongol conquest from the east devastated such cities as Samarkand and Bukhara, places of learning and culture for the Iranians. The initial massacres and destruction were reported by those who lived to tell of the apocalyptic scale of devastation. In time, however, the Mongol khans along with their armies became Muslims, adopted the Persian language, and brought forth an age of cultural efflorescence under the Ilkhanids and the Timurids between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries CE. Persian miniatures and the Persian language were the two best-known products of this period. Such fabulous structures as the mausoleum of Oljitu Khodabandeh at Sultaniyeh are a testament to the domed architecture of medieval Iran.

The flourishing of the Persian language in this period is of particular importance for the culture of medieval Iran, as this is the period when some of Iran's most important literary figures appeared. Some of these figures lived on the Iranian Plateau, and others traversed and lived in other parts of the Islamic world. Sa'di lived in Shiraz during the thirteenth century, at one of the most difficult times in the history of Iran and Asia, the Mongol onslaught that devastated the Middle East and the Iranian world. Amid this havoc, Sa'di produced his important works, such as the

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Bustan and *Golestan,* which present strong moral and social traditions and wisdom at a time of trouble. Even as late as the mid-twentieth century, an Iranian who claimed to be learned would have to have studied the works of Sa'di. In the thirteenth century, another Persian poet, Mowlana Jalal al-din Balkhi, known in the West as Rumi, became the mystic poet par excellence of the Persian language, the Muslim world, and today of the West. Hafez lived in the fourteenth century CE in the city of Shiraz. He never left his city, but Iranians and Persian speakers from all around the world still visit his tomb and read his poems about love, mysticism, carnal and metaphysical pleasure, and drunkenness. In the fourteenth century, the Muslim traveler Ibn Battuta could hear Persian being spoken as far away as China, and Persian was the language of the court and administration in India until the nineteenth century, when British colonization ended that tradition. It was via the same avenue that words associated with the "East" in the Western mind also managed to travel far and wide. Images of mystery and the idea of the East, where people are huddled in bazaars or traveling by horse or camel and stopping at caravanserais, are most associated with the medieval Muslim world. In fact, the words *bazaar* (Persian *bāzār* from Pahlavi *wāzār*) and *caravan* (Persian and Pahlavi *kārwān*) are of Persian origin and travelled to Mughal India, where they entered European languages.

In the sixteenth century, Iran as a territory came under the control of a new dynasty that followed the spiritual path of Shaykh Safi al-Din (d. 1334). The Safavids were of Kurdo-Azeri origins. The force of their militant piety changed Iran from a largely Sunni Muslim population with sizable Jewish, Zoroastrian, and Christian minorities into a Shi'ite empire, pressed between the Ottoman and Mughal gunpowder empires. In the official correspondence of the Safavids, their realm was called *Iran*. The new capital at Isfahan became one of the wonders of the world, renowned for its beauty, with its bazaar, mosques, and gardens. One can still experience this Safavid cultural renaissance when visiting the city of Isfahan. The Safavids protected Iran at a time when Europeans were attempting to establish their power in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. In the eighteenth century, Afghans were able to topple the last Safavid ruler, Shah Sultan Hosein, and bring Safavid rule to an end.

The tide was quickly turned, and Nader Shah Afshar, followed by Karim Khan Zand, restored the independence of Iran under the Afsharid and Zand dynasties in the eighteenth century. Nader Shah even flexed his power in the east and invaded India, effectively ending Mughal power. Karim Khan, in his turn, attempted the creation of a representative system by calling himself "Advocate of the People" and ruling from the city of Shiraz. The tranquility brought by Karim Khan was short-lived, and the country finally fell to the Qajar dynasty, which ruled from 1794 to 1921 and was established by Agha Muhammad Khan Qajar. Iran encountered modernity during the Qajar period, but also lost some of its territories to the Russians. The Qajars, however, managed to strike a balance and kept Iran independent between the British and Russian powers, who aimed to control the country economically and politically. On the other hand, the longest-ruling Qajar king, Naser al-Din Shah along with Amir Kabir, attempted to build the institutions for a modern state at his

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capital, Tehran. Travels to Europe and fascination with the modern world began the process of modernization and the transmission of new ideas into the country. From gaslit and then electricity-lit streets to a new bureaucratic apparatus to newspapers, all were introduced to the populace. During these innovations and changes, despotic and monarchic absolutism remained unshaken until the population, led by Shi'i clergy and secular leaders, brought about the Constitutional Revolution in 1906. The king was forced to sign the constitution and a parliament was established, along with elections where people were able to have a say in the decision making. The Iranian constitution was one of the earliest constitutions approved by a people in the Middle East, and it attempted to curtail the powers of the ruler and give voice to the people.

In 1921, an Iranian Cossack officer named Reza Khan came to power through a coup d'état and was crowned the first Pahlavi ruler in 1925. Iran now moved faster toward secularization and modernization, leaving the Shi'i clerical establishment and much of Iran's traditional past behind. The reforms of Naser al-Din Shah became much more pronounced and institutionalized under Reza Shah and his son. The discovery of oil in the early twentieth century propelled Iran into building the country's infrastructure and educating the populace, while also the state changed the calendar system and forcing women to remove their traditional *hejab*.

After Reza Shah was deposed by the British in 1941, his young son, Mohammad Reza Shah, came to the throne. This change created an era of openness in the press, and political participation brought about an important new period in Iran's intellectual and literary history. In 1951, the democratically elected prime minister, Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq, nationalized the Iranian oil company, and the shah took flight. In response, the British placed a blockade on the country. Another coup d'état took place, this time by the Iranian army, backed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, which deposed the popularly elected prime minister and brought back the shah. By the 1960s, Iran had an autocratic and repressive regime, silencing any dissident voice through its feared secret service. While a new generation of Iranians was becoming educated and modernized, a large number of Iranians became disgruntled with the cultural polarization of the country and the forsaking of its Islamic tradition and culture. The reforms, such as the emancipation of women, the right to divorce, land reform, breaking the power of the traditional oligarchy, and the secularization of the courts, angered many clerics, including Ayatollah Khomeini, who in 1963 rebuked Muhammad Reza Shah and his increasing dependence on the West and the westernization of Iran.

Increasing evidence suggests that in the last decade of his rule Muhammad Reza was attempting to be less dependent on the United States and the West and more independent, exerting his own power in the region. He was indeed a nationalist, but he had been kept in power through the efforts of the United States and Iran's own secret police and military. Thus the leftists, liberals, and Islamists came together in 1978 to bring down the Pahlavi dynasty. The shah's attempts at appeasing the populace by appointing a more liberal government were too little, too late. He left the country, and in February 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini returned. In a matter of months, the Islamic Republic of Iran was established. This uprising is

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considered the last great revolution of the twentieth century, and it changed the political makeup of the Middle East. In many ways, it was the beginning of Islamic movements, resistance, and conflict against the West in the Muslim world. Iran's and Islam's response to imperialism, outlined a century earlier by Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi (in the West known as al-Afghani), had come to fruition.

For the next eight years, through religious and ideological fervor, Iranians lost their aspirations for freedom and democratic values and opted for Islam and a "return" to their Islamic past. Their social rights were severely curbed, many were executed, political dissent was silenced, and the liberals, leftists, and some of the Islamists were arrested. At the same time, a war with Iraq exhausted Iran's resources and capital. The capture of the United States embassy and the war in Lebanon caused major tensions in the region and the world. These conflicts led to Iran's isolation in the international community, especially among the Western countries. Subsequently, actions taken by Iranian students and backed by Ayatollah Khomeini brought the demise of the religious, but liberal, prime minister, Mehdi Bazargan, and later the escape of the first Iranian president, Abol Hasan Bani Sadr. From then on, the clergy were in power, and their aspiration was the establishment of a religious autocracy throughout the Islamic world. In 1988, when the Iran-Iraq War had come to an end, a large number of political prisoners were executed and Ayatollah Khomeini passed away. From 1989 to 2001, Iran's political posture became less radical, with the exception of the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The government began a reconstruction plan that rebuilt Iran's infrastructure and industry and brought water and electricity to villages and small cities. Free universities were established in most cities to educate the large number of youth who were born after the revolution. The government operated based on the motto of "neither Eastern nor Western" and emphasized Iran's independence from world powers.

In 1997, Mohammad Khatami was elected president by a landslide and brought major social changes to the country. In fact, there was a revival of culture in Iran. Films, books, newspapers, and music flourished. Restrictions on women and the stringent dress code were eased; openness, as well as better relations with the West, improved Iran's image and position in the world. Khatami's motto and agenda of "dialogue among civilizations" inspired major changes and new aspirations, especially for the young, who composed more than half of the Iranian population. Still, the supreme leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was archconservative, attempted to slow or completely block these changes. In 1999, university students took to the streets and the first signs of discontent among the second generation of postrevolutionary Iranians revealed themselves. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader, who until then had acted as an arbiter between the liberal and conservatives in the government, clamped down on the movement. Unfortunately, the 9/11 bombings in the United States in 2001 hardened the U.S. stance toward the Islamic world. Although Iran was willing to enter into negotiations with the United States, President George W. Bush and his administration ignored the request and pushed on with their war plans in Iraq and Afghanistan, further weakening President

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Khatami. Iran was mentioned by Bush as part of the "Axis of Evil," and with that statement all hopes for reforms in Iran were dashed.

In 2005 the hard-line messianic Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became the sixth president of Iran. His populist platform brought major changes in the political landscape of the country. His defiance of the international community, holocaust denial, and pro-Palestinian stance made him popular in the Muslim world. At the same time, he clamped down on the press and the publication of books and attempted to make the country more Islamic in its outlook and behavior. The Revolutionary Guards were given lucrative government contracts and took larger part in the economy and politics of Iran.

The contested election of 2009 seems to have started a new chapter in modern Iranian political struggle. The protest that ensued have further the aspiration of the 1906 and 1979 revolutions and are expressed by a new generation that does not only seek a nominal representation but true freedom from political and social norm.

The sixteen chapters in this book provide a comprehensive study of the Iranian world (Oxus to Euphrates) and its history, going beyond the borders of the modern nation-state. Boundaries of states and empires fluctuate throughout history, but their cultural values resonate and remain where they flourished for centuries. These essays not only elucidate the basic political and social history of Iran but also demonstrate its resonance in the larger Iranian cultural world (what I call Ērānšhāhr/Iranshahr), which includes Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf states. The Iranian identity, which was formed through a long historical process, also appears beyond the modern territory of the state of Iran. Not only do Tajiks and some Afghans may claim to be Iranians, but Iranians look at the Central Asian world as a place where Iranian culture and the Persian language formed and developed. Indeed, there is a sense of cultural unity that connects these people, regardless of the political and linguistic changes that have taken place in modern times.

I hope that this book demonstrates that Iran and Iranians have had a complex history, formed gradually throughout different periods. To understand Iranian history and the Iranian people, one needs to study these developments and the elements of continuity and change. For Iranians, the past very much influences their interactions and social and political conduct today. The Achaemenid Empire, the Sasanians, the Arab Muslim and Mongol conquests, and the British, Russian, and American hegemony all have left an indelible mark on the psyche of Iranians. Without knowing their history, one will not be able to understand the Iranians, who, like many other peoples, hold their history to be a sacred and guiding light.

Ever since the seventeenth-century rise of European interest in Orientalism, the study of Iran—or, as it was known then, Persia—has been one of the passions of scholar-gentlemen. Ancient Greek and Roman accounts, coupled with those of European explorers and travelers who were guided and haunted by the earlier accounts, made Iran a destination of scholarly interest. Russian, British, French, and German colonial and political interests and power over Iran made its study an imperative, as lands that had been influenced by Iranian culture or had been

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part of its various polities were now in European hands. For example, the official language of India, which had been Persian until the late eighteenth century, was changed to English. In the eighteenth century, Afghanistan finally left the orbit of Iranian political control. In the nineteenth century, the Caucasus—which includes the modern states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia—was seized by the Russians, and in the twentieth century, Bahrain gained its independence from Iran. In a sense, the study of Iranian culture was brought about by European interest in these areas and Iran itself. In the modern period, interest in Iran grew steadily, especially after the discovery of oil in Iran made it an important regional power. With the creation of a modern state and the promotion of the study of Iran by the Pahlavi dynasty, scholars became more interested in the country as one of the non-Arab states in the Middle East.

With the 1979 revolution in Iran, there was a radical turn away from secularism to an Islamic state and a reaction to the long period of political and economic control by Europeans and Americans. Iran's insistence on its independence from foreign control and on flexing its muscles in the region increasingly made it interesting to the academic community. Its status as a unique theocratic state in the modern world, but at the same time one of the few nations in the Middle East with some form of representative government, was another reason for the renewed interest in Iran. The government and its domestic policies, its tough rhetoric with Israel, the issue of nuclear power—all these peculiarities have made Iran an important country to study. To understand why and how these events took place or are taking place, one needs to know Iran's history and traditions. Otherwise, Iran remains an elusive and incomprehensible place, of interest only to popular news channels and commentators who have not bothered to learn its history.

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CHAPTER 1

THE IRANIAN PLATEAU FROM PALEOLITHIC TIMES TO THE RISE OF THE ACHAEMENID EMPIRE

KAMYAR ABDI

WRITING an archaeological history of Iran from an anthropological perspective is a challenge. Unlike Mesopotamia or Egypt, where indigenous cultures evolved in a more or less sequential fashion in compact river valleys, Iran's broken topography poses major obstacles to uniform sociocultural development. High mountain ridges and large expanses of inhospitable deserts divide Iran into several largely distinct environmental zones, each with its own local cultural configuration and social trajectory, changing over time in different modes and tempos. Sociocultural diversity is most apparent in earlier periods; while southwestern Iran witnessed the emergence of complex societies and states, parts of eastern Iran had only villages and small towns. Later, during the Bronze Age, when eastern Iran experienced a short period of urbanism, the western and northwestern parts of the country had only a few sizable towns, while the majority of the population presumably led a nomadic life.

We should, however, bear in mind that in the past century and a half of archaeological research in Iran, different parts of the country and its prehistory have received unequal attention. While a considerable part of western and southern Iran has been explored relatively comprehensively, eastern and northern Iran remains largely an archaeological terra incognita. The amount of archaeological research on different periods also varies greatly. For example, research on the

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Paleolithic period is negligible compared to its long time span, while the Neolithic period has received considerable attention because of its significance for major archaeological research topics, such as the origins of food production and sedentism. The Early and Middle Chalcolithic periods have also suffered from inattention, while the era of early state formation in the Late Chalcolithic period has been explored in considerable detail. The Early Bronze Age best represents this disparity in archaeological research; while the Proto-Elamite period in southern and eastern Iran has been a popular topic for research, the contemporary Yanik culture in northwestern Iran has been neglected. The phenomena of urbanism and interregional exchange in the Middle Bronze Age have understandably attracted much archaeological research, while the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age have scarcely been explored beyond mortuary remains. The Late Iron Age has also been studied to a certain degree, partly for the rise of the Medes and Persians, but it too has its share of unknowns.

It is therefore not surprising that our archaeological knowledge of Iran is uneven both temporally and spatially, a fact that observant readers should realize from this brief survey of Iranian prehistory.

Paleolithic Times (ca. 1,000,000 to 12,000 bce): Hunters and Gatherers on the Move

Research on the Paleolithic period in Iran is in its infancy, but Iran's strategic location in the Near East, bordered on the north and south by large bodies of water, is an indication that it was the only land bridge hunter-gatherers of Paleolithic times could have crossed on their migrations from Africa to Southeast Asia. While evidence for the Lower Paleolithic in Iran is scarce, disjointed, and not entirely reliable, the recent discovery of *Homo erectus* remains in Georgia, as well as abundant Lower Paleolithic remains in the lands to the east, promise a productive research future.

Middle Paleolithic occupations, mostly discovered in the Zagros, tend to occur in cave sites, usually in locations close to sources of raw material for making stone tools. Middle Paleolithic stone tools, generally called Mousterian, include unifacial triangular points and sidescrapers, indicating an economy predominantly relying on hunting. In fact, analysis of faunal remains from Kobeh Cave, Ghar-i Khar, and Warwasi rock-shelter in the Central Zagros indicate that a wide range of ungulates, including some large mammals, were hunted by Middle Paleolithic people.

The Upper Paleolithic settlement pattern in the Zagros shows a shift to open-air sites and seems to have consisted of a hierarchy of sites, including some larger sites that may have served as the home base for a band of some fifty individuals.

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In addition, there were smaller camps of families formed from the breakdown of larger bands. The lower levels of Upper Paleolithic settlement hierarchy included short-lived hunting-fishing camps of one to five men close to game country, and small camps of one to three men occupied for only one or two days for the purpose of procuring raw materials.

With the Upper Paleolithic period, the stone tool industry shows more variation and more distinction. The Upper Paleolithic of the Zagros is primarily characterized by stone tool industries known as Baradostian and Zarzian. Compared to the Mousterian tool industry, the Baradostian shows an increase in the number of tool types and greater emphasis on tool-making techniques. While some tool types such as sidescrapers continue to be made, new types such as blades and bladelets appear, signaling a change in subsistence toward more utilization of floral resources. The next tool industry, known as Zarzian, may have developed from the Baradostian, but a chronological gap between the two is also likely. The shift to smaller and retouched tools that began in the previous period continues through Zarzian, with the introduction of microliths and microburins.

It has been estimated that the Zarzian period began by 20,000 BCE and perhaps ended around 12,000 BCE, although there are only a few dated sites to verify these estimates. One of the few dates for the Zarzian period comes from Pa Sangar Cave in the Khorramabad Plain and implies an occupation of the cave between 15,300 and 15,000 BCE, contemporary with the Kebaran sites of the Levant, with which Zarzian shares some typological similarities. By the late Zarzian period, roughly corresponding to the end of the Pleistocene period around 12,000 BCE, the tool industry emphasizing microliths, as well as evidence for composite tools and other tool types, perhaps for grinding wild grains, at sites such as Ghar-i Khar, Warwasi, and Pa Sangar rock-shelters, suggests a gradual shift to an economy increasingly dependent on collecting wild plants. It has been argued, however, that there may have been a chronological gap and a shift from higher to lower elevations from the end of the Paleolithic period (Zarzian) to the Early (Aceramic) Neolithic period in the Zagros. In the Zagros, following the Zarzian there is no known counterpart to the Natufian of the Levant. The next evidence chronologically consists of a small series of prepottery Neolithic sites with some traces of architecture (see below). Some researchers argue that the chronological gap and shift to lower elevation can be attributed to environmental changes in the region. This is based on pollen data for 13,000 to 11,000 BCE, implying that the climatic conditions became noticeably drier and/or colder just before the turn for the better. Consequently, the middle elevations of the Zagros (600 to 1,500 m above sea level) remained largely treeless during the Bølling-Allerød phase of the Younger Dryas, thus offering human groups limited plants and animals to exploit. This change forced the hunter-gatherers of the late Zarzian period into lower elevations, where they came into close contact with wild ancestors of a number of animals, most importantly the caprines, that is, sheep and goats.

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Epipaleolithic and Early Neolithic (12,000 to 6000 BCE): Origins of Food Production and Sedentism

The Zagros Mountains and their western foothills were probably one of the several places in the Near East where two major developments in human history, food production, and sedentism began. By the Late Epipaleolithic period (ca. 10,000 to 8000 BCE), the hunter-gatherer diet changed radically to include a larger number of smaller and localized faunal resources, as well as more floral material. Post-Pleistocene climatic fluctuations and environmental changes in the Near East were probably an important impetus for these changes, forcing bands of hunter-gatherers to intensify and diversify their exploitation of their environment by adopting a broad-spectrum economy in which subsistence depended on many smaller, local food items.

Early villages are known to have existed in Iran as early as 7000 BCE, featuring modest huts and a variety of grinding tools, but without evidence of either domestic animals or cultivated plants. These villages seem to be part of a wide phenomenon that occurred toward the end of the Bølling-Allerød phase of the Younger Dryas. A noticeable reduction in cereal-type pollen in deposits from Lake Zeribar in the Central Zagros indicate drier conditions. It is possible that these climatic conditions affected overall biotic productivity and restricted the movements of hunter-gatherers to highly localized areas where forest products could be exploited. Following the Younger Dryas, a climatic amelioration allowed forests to spread, segmenting formerly open ranges into smaller units and arranging niches for different species by altitude and type of vegetation. Sedentism and the reduction of the open range encouraged territoriality. People began to protect and propagate local herds of caprines, a predomestication practice that can be referred to as a food resource management strategy ultimately leading to domestication. Later, when domesticated cereals reached the Zagros from Transjordan through the Levantine corridor, there was opportunity for people to establish more elaborate villages based on herding, collecting, and agriculture outside the forest zone. In the meantime, with the climate getting warmer and wetter, caprines, as well as village-based hunters and herders—and following them, farmers—began to spread into higher elevations. Soon early villages began to flourish in the Zagros and its foothills.

Remains of the crucial period of transition from food procurement to food production come from a number of sites in western Iran, including the Central Zagros. Tepe Asiab in the Kermanshah Plain is a semipermanent campsite of this period. The excavated area at Asiab contained remains of a temporary circular shelter with two burials under its floor, both of which were stained with red ochre and associated with personal ornaments. Asiab yielded the first objet d'art in Iranian history, a clay figurine of a boar, now on display at the Iran National Museum in Tehran.

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There are other sites, such as Sarab and Ganj Dareh in the same region and Guran further south in the Hulailan Valley, Ali Kosh in the Deh Luran Plain, and Chogha Bonut in the Susiana Plain with semipermanent occupations in their basal levels, gradually giving way to permanent dwellings. Most of these early villages exhibit the adoption of agriculture by people who had depended on hunting and gathering until a few hundred years earlier. The combination of domestic plants and animals sometime around 6000 BCE allowed the beginning of early village life and paved the way for further developments.

Middle Neolithic to Middle Chalcolithic (ca. 6000 to 4000 BCE): Path to Social Complexity

Shortly after 6000 BCE, food-producing villages were abundant in western Iran, especially in clusters in the Solduz Valley in Azerbaijan, the Kermanshah-Mahidasht Plains in the Central Zagros, the Hulailan Valley in Luristan, the Deh Luran and Susiana plains, and the Kur River Basin in Fars. Thanks to a massive fire that partially burned and preserved Ganj Dareh Level D, we have gained an understanding of the internal organization of an early village, with small mud-brick houses each consisting of living and food-preparation spaces and storage facilities, mainly for foodstuffs. Due to burning, many architectural details have been preserved at Ganj Dareh, but whether this was an exception or whether early Neolithic villages of the Zagros all enjoyed such architectural standards remains to be explored.

Unlike Pre-Pottery Neolithic sites in the Levant or Çatal Höyük in Anatolia, where social complexity and ritual behavior appear shortly after the emergence of sedentary life, early villages in Iran show very little architectural evidence for ritual activities, perhaps a result of a propensity to put small excavations in small sites. Among the few exceptions may have been the "Painted Building" at Tepe Zagheh in the Central Plateau and a niche with two attached goat skulls at Ganj Dareh, which may suggest some sort of "ritual" activities.

Considerable archaeological research in the Susiana and Deh Luran plains in the past several decades has provided us with a general picture of the development of village life in southwestern Iran. In both plains, sedentary life began in dispersed villages close to water and food supplies. Despite their limited numbers, these villages were not isolated but maintained regional and interregional contact, as evidenced by imported materials, including obsidian, shell, and turquoise, coming from regions as far away as eastern Anatolia, the Persian Gulf, and Khorasan.

These early villages exploited a wide variety of available resources, but sedentary life in an arid environment with limited food resources, as well as population increase, forced people to intensify their food production by bringing more

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land under cultivation, expanding their flocks, and domesticating cows. Cows can pull plows, though our direct evidence of this in plow-marked fields and in figurines of cows with painted traces and halters occurs later. With the help of cows, people could bring even more land under cultivation. But, more importantly, cows can produce more milk than early sheep and goats, and after a millennium or more of cow milk being given to human babies whose mothers had little milk of their own, the digestive system of humans must have developed the ability to process lactose at least as semiprocessed yogurt or cheese. If so, our "domestic bacteria" that make cheese and yogurt must have come soon after the appearance of cows. An application of the new electrophoresis techniques to unwashed basin and jar shards from early villages such as Chogha Sefid, Zagheh, and Iblis "0" may show traces of lipids and bacteria. At the same time that the cow-plow-milk-yogurt complex was developing, the old technology of green-grain parching ovens was applied to bread baking and pottery firing, allowing such high-fired buff wares as Archaic Susiana 3 in Susiana, Seh Gabi in the Central Zagros, Dalma in Azerbaijan, and Bakun in Fars. This development marks the beginning of the Chalcolithic period.

Raised breads baked in new ovens would imply yeasts and probably beer. We have independent evidence of early yeasts in the form of wine jars found at Haji Firuz Tepe in Azerbaijan, and later at Godin Tepe in the Central Zagros. Processed grain and grain foods, along with domestic pulses like lentils and chickpeas, provide more plant protein, so people did not need to consume as much meat. In fact, there do seem to have been fewer nomadic camps in the Zagros during the Middle Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic periods, which may indicate less herding.

With this fundamental change in food production and preparation, there is also architectural evidence for social changes from single-family to larger units in Early Susiana sites and Iblis level "0." This architectural change signals a shift in socioeconomic structure, allowing for incorporation of a larger labor force into productive activities.

Another major innovation in riverine plains like Susiana and Deh Luran was the development of irrigation agriculture by digging canals to divert water from rivers to agricultural fields. This accomplishment, though originally meant to augment the subsistence economy, had some social impact as well. First, it introduced the benefits of collective labor in large-scale construction works. Second, in the long run, hand in hand with agricultural intensification, irrigation facilitated the accumulation of surplus products. This, in turn, led to differential access to resources. In the course of time, those who had more food to spare in times of shortage realized the significance of their prerogative and exploited it to acquire special social privileges for themselves and their kin. This process led to what anthropologists usually call ranking. Rank originally depended on an individual's own achievement during his or her lifetime, but later, through mechanisms not entirely clear to us, rank was passed on from one generation to the next. Hereditary ranking meant that individuals enjoyed a special rank from the moment they were born, regardless of their personal merits. Special rank brought some people higher status; this included

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privileged access to resources and the special respect they received from other members of the society of lower rank.

Individuals of high rank, who had now become leaders of their villages, consolidated their control over resources and the operation of their societies. The residence of one of these early leaders may have been excavated at Chogha Mish. This structure, dated to the Middle Susiana period, is considerably larger and better built than typical houses of the same time, and in its many rooms archaeologists have found evidence for different craft activities such as pottery making and flint knapping.

The villages where the leaders resided also grew in size. With the emergence and agglomeration of specialized and full-time craftsmen and ritualists in larger villages, they became the central places for the surrounding region. By the Middle Susiana period in the Susiana Plain and the Bakun phase in Fars, a two- or three-tier settlement hierarchy emerged, with leaders and their associates living in larger villages and subordinates in smaller villages. In the meantime, leaders were engaged in extending their authority beyond the immediate limits of their villages to nearby settlements and to the surrounding region.

A more or less similar process was probably underway in other parts of Iran. Almost every valley in the Zagros Mountains with sufficient water and cultivable land had a small center and a few satellite villages. Larger plains show even more hierarchical settlement patterns, with centers as large as 10 hectares, several villages of 2 to 5 hectares, and numerous small hamlets. In the meantime, between the Late Neolithic and Late Chalcolithic periods, from the early agricultural village society of the Central Zagros emerged a new socioeconomic formation that by the Late Chalcolithic period consolidated itself as nomadic pastoralism. The initial development of pastoralism in the Central Zagros was an adaptive strategy to a highland environment with limited and dispersed resources in order to supplement a primarily agricultural village-based economy. With the expansion of the agricultural regime, the distance to be traveled to pastures became greater, and as a consequence, the organization of labor involved in herding had to be modified to meet the more complex task of moving sizable herds over larger areas. This process lead to the divergence of nomadic societies primarily occupied with pastoralism from village communities primarily concerned with agriculture. Archaeological evidence for these early nomadic societies has been discovered in the Central Zagros and in Pusht-i Kuh, Luristan, at the two isolated cemeteries of Hakalan and Dum Gar-i Parchineh. Both cemeteries have yielded burials with grave goods including stamp seals and ceramics similar to, but iconographically different from, those of Susa that suggest early steps toward ranking. Since no settlement has been recorded in association with these cemeteries, they have usually been attributed to nomadic people.

Another notable cultural zone in this era is the Central Plateau, where the Cheshmeh Ali culture demonstrates the initial steps toward craft specialization and sociopolitical complexity. Unfortunately, the lack of regional archaeological surveys and limited excavations restricts our knowledge of sociopolitical processes in a large

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part of Iran. Once again, we have to turn to southwestern Iran, especially to the Susiana Plain, in order to assess this process.

Village leaders' policy of expanding their spheres of influence and acquiring resources, especially agricultural fields, may have put neighboring villages on a collision course. Violent conflicts arose during which some villages were attacked by others and the seat of the defeated leader was set on fire; an example can be seen in the conflagration of Chogha Mish at the end of the Middle Susiana period. From this regional conflict, and with Chogha Mish out of the picture, Susa emerged as the new center of the Susiana Plain.

Susa may have been founded in the Late Susiana period, but by the Susa I period it flourished as the dominant center of the Susiana Plain, a position it maintained for much of the next five thousand years until Middle Islamic times. The most important structures of the Susa I period at Susa are in the area known as the Acropole. Early in this century, French archaeologists discovered a rectangular mud-brick platform, which they called the *massif funéraire*, measuring ca. 7 × 14 m, and preserved to a height of 1.7 m. This platform may have been the foundation for a ceremonial or religious structure. Dug into and in the area below and around the massif, in an area between 120 and 750 sq m, an estimated 2,000 primary and secondary burials have been recovered, some associated with elegant black-on-buff Susa I beakers, copper axes, and stamp seals depicting figures in elaborate costumes. This necropolis has been interpreted as a mass grave or the supralocal cemetery of the satellite settlements of Susa.

The *massif funéraire* and its cemetery were followed in a few generations by the construction of a larger platform called the *haute terrasse*. This large stepped structure, some 11 m high, supported on its top an area of about 70 × 65 m that, according to some scholars, served as the foundation for the residence of a high-ranking individual, perhaps a priest-ruler. The south side of the *haute terrasse*, some 80 m long, was decorated with inlaid ceramic cones in groups of four or five, plaque mosaics, and clay models of goat horns.

While the Susa society clearly exhibits characteristics of ranking, it does not seem to have enjoyed a complex political formation on a state level of organization. It seems that a certain group, who may or may not have exerted direct control over production, were involved in some sort of periodic ritual activities probably aimed at enhancing social cohesion among the town dwellers of Susa, people in surrounding villages, and perhaps the nomadic pastoralists in the hinterland. These sociocultural developments were nonetheless essential in laying the foundations for the formation of early states on the Susiana Plain in a few centuries.

As these developments were underway in Susiana, several archaeological sites on the Central Plateau displayed remarkable technological advances, especially in metallurgy. Excavations at Tepe Qabrestan, ca. 60 km south of Qazvin on the Central Plateau, revealed a multiroom copper workshop, while molds for open casting of copper utensils and objects have been discovered at Tepe Sialk in Kashan and Tell-i Iblis south of Kerman. Most of the copper used in this flourishing industry came from mines in central and southeastern Iran, the areas around Kashan and Kerman.

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The discovery of copper axes and "mirrors" in a number of Susa I graves at Susa along with elaborate black-on-buff pottery and stamp seals may point to the metal's considerable social and economic significance at this time.

Few other cultures of this time in the Zagros or the plateau exhibit the level of sociopolitical complexity seen at Susa. One may have been the Bakun culture of Fars, with its long duration, wide geographical distribution, and a pottery tradition as sophisticated as that of Susa I. Excavations at Tol-e Bakun in the Kur River basin revealed a large building with more than one hundred seal impressions from tags, bales, sacks, and doors. This concentration of sealings in a single structure has prompted use of the term "administrative quarter" to describe this building.

Fars witnessed a considerable population increase by the Middle Bakun phase. Under poorly understood conditions, population growth and craft specialization may have led to the emergence of a centralized control system to coordinate the local irrigation system, storage, and redistribution of staple foods and other products. This control system, operating through "administrative quarters" such as the one excavated at Tol-e Bakun, however, could not prevent the irrigation system from failing. Poorly managed riverine irrigation may have led to increasing soil salinity. As a consequence, by the Late Bakun phase, the agricultural regime seems to have failed, and the sedentary population dropped to far below its peak during Middle Bakun levels. It has been argued that by the middle of the subsequent Lapui phase, much of the population had adopted a pastoral nomadic way of life to support their flocks, and hence their subsistence, by moving from one patch of grazing land to another. The settlement system remained more or less the same until the middle of the succeeding Banesh phase and the emergence of the Proto-Elamite civilization. But before turning to this crucial era in Iranian history, we should take a look at the developments in more western areas, especially the Susiana Plain and further west, in Mesopotamia.

Late Chalcolithic Period (ca. 4000 to 3200 BCE): The Rise of Early States

The lowlands of southwestern Iran have been among the most important areas for the study of the mechanisms leading to the emergence of primary states. Regional archaeological surveys in the Susiana Plain suggest population increase up to the Susa I period, when political structure was still at a prestate level of organization. In this period, Susa controlled a series of smaller settlement clusters to the north, east, and south. In the succeeding Terminal Susa I period, Susa was partially destroyed and subsequently declined in size, and the settlement network of the previous period also disintegrated. The Susa I culture, with its monumental structures at

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Susa and its sophisticated pottery, gave way to the new Susa II culture, with a different architectural orientation and a pottery tradition demonstrating close affinities with the Uruk culture of Mesopotamia.

By the beginning of the Early Uruk phase (ca. 4000 BCE), Susa seems to have been partially abandoned, but the rest of the Susiana Plain was dotted with several settlements of roughly the same size, which may represent poorly integrated, perhaps competing, centers. By the end of the Early Uruk phase, Susa expanded and reestablished its dominance over the Susiana Plain. The development of a three-level administrative system with considerable control over villages as well as larger settlements suggests that the end of the Early Uruk and beginning of the Middle Uruk phase was evidently when the Susiana Plain witnessed the emergence of an early state system, though regional surveys indicate a relatively low population density compared to Late Susiana times. In this era, we also see a gradual standardization of products, so that by the Late Uruk phase (ca. 3400 BCE) standard craft goods, especially pottery produced in a handful of centers, replaced goods in local traditions as far as distant small valleys. By the end of the Middle Uruk and beginning of the Late Uruk phase, archaeological evidence indicates an elaborate central political and administrative system in operation. The emergence of central control with three to four levels of hierarchy correlates with rapid population nucleation, probably at the expense of defeated competing centers, especially Chogha Mish, which was abandoned by the middle of the Late Uruk phase. In fact, the Late Uruk iconographic evidence suggests an increasing conflict, perhaps in order to annex and reorganize the surrounding areas.

An important development in the era of early state formation was the invention of complex administrative tools, including clay tokens, hollow spherical envelopes called bullae, and cylinder seals, to keep track of increasing economic transactions. It seems that the development of this accounting system led to the emergence of writing in a couple of centuries. Based on the excavated material from Susa, the following scheme has been proposed for the development of writing from early administrative tools: starting in the Middle Uruk phase, in addition to simple tokens that were around from the Neolithic period, we begin to see complex tokens with incisions on their surface. Later in the Middle Uruk phase (Susa, Acropole I, Layer 18), simple and complex tokens were enveloped in bullae that bear cylinder seal impressions on their surface. Slightly later in this period, bullae are impressed with signs corresponding to the tokens encased in them. Toward the end of Layer 18, impressed bullae give way to oblong and rounded clay tablets with impressed and incised signs and cylinder seal impressions. In the next layer (Acropole I, Layer 17), corresponding to the Late Uruk phase, we see more rectangular clay tablets with numerical signs and cylinder seal impressions that closely resemble Late Uruk examples discovered in Mesopotamian sites such as Uruk. Finally, in the following Layer 16C, we see Proto-Elamite administrative tools, including tablets bearing Proto-Elamite signs and seal impressions along with Proto-Elamite seals and sealings. Similar administrative tools are discovered in widely distributed sites on the Iranian Plateau all the way to the Central Asian and Indian borderlands. But before we look at the

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Proto-Elamite period, let us conclude our discussion of the Uruk period with some observations on its ethnic and political setting.

Some scholars, pointing out the mixed ethnic composition of lowland Susiana in general and Susa in particular in later times, suggest that the shift from an Iranian-oriented culture in Susa I times to a predominantly Mesopotamian-oriented culture in Susa II indicates the ascendancy of individuals of Mesopotamian affiliation at Susa. Other scholars, however, reach bolder conclusions and argue for the Mesopotamian colonization of Susiana. This era coincides with the distribution of Uruk material culture in a wide region extending from the Iranian Plateau to Anatolia. Recent studies point out that some Uruk material from northern Mesopotamia and southeastern Anatolia is more closely related to that from Susa than to that of Uruk. This may suggest that the Uruk expansion was not carried out by a centralized empire controlled from a single center, the city of Uruk; instead, a number of Uruk polities, including Susa, may have been involved in this phenomenon of cultural expansion.

Most of the Susiana Plain was abandoned by the middle of the Late Uruk phase, with only Susa itself and settlements south of it yielding much pottery from the later part of the phase. The fact that eastern Susiana was abandoned first, followed by northwestern Susiana, suggests that, in addition to internal conflict, there was pressure from the east, from the Proto-Elamites coming from Fars. The Proto-Elamite period marks the end of the Chalcolithic period and the beginning of the Bronze Age in Iranian archaeology.

Early Bronze Age (ca. 3200 to 2200 BCE): Consolidation of Nomadic-Sedentary Dichotomy

The Early Bronze Age witnessed major developments in Iran. A dimorphic polity of pastoral nomads and sedentary agriculturalists was established in the highlands of Fars in the Proto-Elamite period, while another culture, perhaps also with an important nomadic component, moved southward into the Near East from the Caucasus and occupied parts of western Iran up to the borders of the Central Plateau. In the meantime, the western Zagros foothills show close ties with Jemdet Nasr and the Early Dynastic cultures of Mesopotamia. Therefore, in order to study the Early Bronze Age two major cultural spheres need to be defined: (1) the Proto-Elamite and Proto-Elamite-related sphere in southern Iran from Susiana all the way to Shahr-i Sokhteh in Sistan in eastern Iran, extending northward to the Central Zagros into the present-day Bakhtiari mountains and to the Central Plateau as far as Tepe Sialk and Tepe Hissar, and (2) the Yanik sphere in northwest Iran, as far south as Godin Tepe in the Central Zagros and Qazvin Plain in the Central Plateau.

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The Proto-Elamite Sphere

The Proto-Elamite sphere is characterized by Proto-Elamite material culture, the hallmarks of which are distinct administrative devices, including typically small cushion-shaped clay tablets inscribed with Proto-Elamite script; seals and sealings with naturalistic motifs, including anthropomorphized animals, especially bulls and lions, and supernatural beings; and a distinctive group of seals and sealings collectively labeled Glazed Steatite Glyptic Style, demonstrating a complex visual system of hatched design elements and individual Proto-Elamite signs. Despite recent breakthroughs in the study of Proto-Elamite script, this writing system still defies complete decipherment. Proto-Elamite tablets were most probably used for storing economic information on a local level, but the utilization of the Proto-Elamite script in distant sites, especially the occurrence of some signs, such as the so-called fringed triangle on tablets discovered at widely dispersed sites like Susa and Yahya, indicate considerable interregional contact.

The Proto-Elamite culture emerged in the Early Banesh phase in the Kur River basin in central Fars sometime around 3300 BCE. Once Susa was reestablished in the Susa III period, around 3200 BCE, the pottery was predominantly Banesh, with characteristic Proto-Elamite administrative devices in abundance. By 3000 BCE, Proto-Elamite sealings and tablets reached Sialk (IV), Yahya (IVC), Shahr-i Sokhteh (I: 10), and probably Hissar II. There is also some evidence for Proto-Elamite contact with Khorasan, Bactria, and southeastern Anatolia, and perhaps as far as Egypt.

The sociopolitical structure of the Proto-Elamite society remains elusive. In its homeland, the Kur River basin in central Fars, about twenty-six sites are dated to the Banesh period, with Malyan as the major center of the plain and the largest Proto-Elamite site yet discovered, perhaps already called Anshan, the highland capital of Elam. Malyan grew from a cluster of smaller sites in the Early Banesh phase to a modest town of at least 40 hectares at the end of the Proto-Elamite period, when a massive wall, encompassing an area of about 200 hectares, was built around the city. Excavations at Operations ABC and TUV at Malyan give us a glance of Proto-Elamite society. Operation TUV, in an isolated area in the southeast corner of the site, is characterized by domestic structures with evidence of craft activities, while Operation ABC has yielded a series of four buildings of increasingly monumental scale. ABC Building Level II, the uppermost building, is described as a large warehouse, while ABC Building Level III is a well-built structure with a formal arrangement of rooms and doorways, some decorated with elaborate frescos of geometric and floral patterns. ABC IV, dated to the Late Proto-Elamite period, is a large structure with evidence of both domestic activities and craft activities.

In addition to Malyan and a few scattered sites, there were two major clusters of sites in the Marvdasht Plain in the Banesh phase: (1) the Qarib cluster, about 10 km to the east of Malyan at the center of the plain, with extensive evidence of craft activities, especially pottery production, and (2) a cluster on the southern slope of the Kuh-e Kuruni. This cluster of unmounded or very low sites has a strategic and

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easily defensible position. It is located in a part of the plain that is today commonly used by pastoral nomads. The presence of stone alignments of undetermined date and Banesh shards as the major components in a number of sites in this cluster suggests that this area was also used by pastoral nomads in Banesh times.

The evidence from Malyan has led some scholars to describe Middle Banesh (Proto-Elamite) Malyan as a small city inhabited by administrative officials and part-time craftsmen, many of whom were also farmers or herdsmen. Banesh society, on the other hand, seems to have been a dimorphic society composed of sedentary farmers and mobile pastoralists. Some scholars suggest that the mobile component of Banesh society may have been a tribal confederacy of nomadic pastoralists. By the Proto-Elamite period, this tribal confederacy may have developed a form of government to organize and control the nomadic/sedentary interaction in the Kur River basin. This governing body, whatever its structure, was almost certainly centered at Malyan, where monumental architecture of Proto-Elamite origin in Operation ABC indicates elite occupation. By the late Proto-Elamite period, it seems that the organization centered at Malyan felt so great a threat from external foes that it mustered extensive labor to build a massive wall around the city.

Shortly after its inception, Proto-Elamite material culture arrived at Susa, perhaps already abandoned by the declining Late Uruk culture. So far, the largest number of Proto-Elamite tablets has been discovered at Susa, perhaps a result of exposures during old French excavations. The Proto-Elamite settlement at Susa seems to have covered around 10 hectares. Besides Susa, there are only a few Susa III sites in Susiana. In the Izeh Plain to the east of Susiana in the Zagros Mountains, however, there is considerable occupation, with at least one site of about 12 hectares.

Proto-Elamite administrative devices are also found in a number of other sites in structures exhibiting similarities to Proto-Elamite buildings at Malyan and Susa. At Tall-i Ghazir in the Ram Hormoz Plain, on a major route between Fars and Susiana, a single Proto-Elamite tablet was discovered with Proto-Elamite/Jemdet Nasr polychrome pottery in a structure described as a warehouse. To the east, the largest collection of Proto-Elamite administrative devices comes from a multiroom structure at Yahya IVC. Further east, a single Proto-Elamite tablet and about twenty seal impressions were discovered in the lowest level at Shahr-i Sokhteh. The pottery associated with these finds, however, shows affinities with eastern Iranian pottery, not with the Banesh or Jemdet Nasr pottery of the west.

It appears that Proto-Elamite administrative devices reached the sites in the Central Plateau last. Proto-Elamite material was discovered in a structure on the top of the southern mound at Tepe Sialk. This structure resembles Proto-Elamite structures at Susa and Malyan in some architectural details, including bi-level hearths and raised doorsills. Two richly furnished adult burials and four infant jar burials were discovered in this structure. Tablets comparable to Proto-Elamite examples are also reported from Tepe Hissar.

Most of these sites, however, seem to be isolated outposts housing small populations using a Proto-Elamite administrative system. They are all located in areas suffering from settlement decline prior to the arrival of Proto-Elamites, perhaps a

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result of transition from a sedentary to a nomadic way of life. Nothing is known about the settlement system around Sialk in this period, but a survey around Tall-i Ghazir has not located any other Late Uruk or Proto-Elamite sites. The situation around Tepe Yahya is somewhat complicated, as the similarity of Yayha IVC and Yahya V (Aliabad) pottery makes distinction rather difficult. Only three sites with diagnostic IVC pottery are reported.

Based on the available evidence, it seems safe to assume that people associated with the Proto-Elamite polity in the Kur River basin may have established these outposts. The reason for this enterprise is not yet clear, but exchange of goods may have been an important incentive. A number of these outposts may have also served as gateway communities for contact between Proto-Elamites and other cultural regions. For instance, Susa has traditionally been the gateway between Iran and Mesopotamia. Likewise, Shahr-i Sokhteh on the Helmand basin can be viewed as the gateway between the southern Iranian Plateau and the Indus Valley. It is interesting that the arrival of Proto-Elamite material in southeast Iran coincides with initial occupation and the appearance of painted pottery in Baluchistan (Bampur I phase). Banesh-like pottery from Liyan in the Bushehr peninsula on the Persian Gulf may suggest a maritime aspect to the Proto-Elamite enterprise, and may perhaps shed some light on alleged Proto-Elamite connections with Protodynastic Egypt. To the north, Sialk was probably used to gain access to copper sources in the little-inhabited Central Plateau, while Hissar may have been a gateway community to Central Asia. We may expect to find evidence for Proto-Elamites in Khorasan, as a few recently reported pieces of beveled-rim bowl from Tepe Farhadgerd in Fariman Plain may suggest a Proto-Elamite penetration into the Mashhad area, an observation supported by the fact that some stones used to make Proto-Elamite seals came from Khorasan. Perhaps one of the sites with Banesh-related pottery in the Khaneh Mirza Plain in the Bakhtiari area was the Proto-Elamite gateway community on a strategic locus close to the boundary between the Proto-Elamite sphere to the south and the Yanik sphere to the north, but this proposition remains to be tested.

By the Late Banesh phase, a massive wall was built around Malyan enclosing an area of about 200 hectares, presumably to protect the city from some regional threat. Recent excavations also suggest that a large mud-brick platform may have been built at Malyan during the Late Banesh phase. Although evidence is beginning to accumulate, the transition from the Banesh phase to the Kaftari phase, roughly corresponding to that from the Proto-Elamite period to the Old Elamite period, still remains ambiguous.

The Yanik Sphere

Roughly contemporary with the Proto-Elamite period in southern Iran, northwestern parts of the country as far south as the Central Zagros Mountains and as far east as the Qazvin Plain in the Central Plateau were occupied by the Yanik culture. The

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Yanik culture is part of a larger phenomenon interchangeably called the Kura-Araxes or Early Transcaucasian Culture, originating from the Caucasus and spreading southward into the Near East in the late fourth to early third millennium BCE. This culture is characterized by round houses and a distinctive burnished pottery usually fired from red to black and sometimes incised with geometric and natural motifs. Early Transcaucasian material culture is found in a vast area in the Near East from the Caucasus, northwestern Iran, and eastern Anatolia to the Levant.

Only a handful of sites with Yanik-related material have been excavated in Iran. The type-site for this culture in Iran is Yanik Tepe, south of Tabriz on the eastern shores of Lake Urmia. The Early Bronze Age deposits at Yanik are divided into two phases, Early Bronze Age (EBA) I and Early Bronze Age (EBA) II.

EBA I shows continuity from local Late Chalcolithic in terms of occupation, although there is a slight shift in settlement center. The material culture of EBA I, however, shows a drastic change from that of the Late Chalcolithic; it is characterized by black or dark grey incised pottery and mud-brick round structures typical of the Yanik culture. These round structures range from around 3 m to over 5 m in diameter. A number of larger structures contain some installations such as bins, niches, and a platform always built to the right side of the entrance. A fragment of wattle-and-daub with an impression of a wooden framework found in one of the later houses suggests that the roofing to these structures was relatively light. A layer of ash found over a Level 2 structure may suggest that this phase was brought to an end by fire. Architectural Level 3 of EBA I is characterized by larger round structures, one almost 7 m in diameter. The most important structure of this phase (House 1), with two concentric outer walls and partitioning inner walls, is located on a prominent position that may have been a granary. Level 3 is surrounded by a massive and thick wall of undressed stones plastered with mud and superimposed by a mud superstructure of unknown height. The outside of the wall was also supported by a roughly built reinforcement. This sort of protective wall may suggest that the inhabitants felt a need for protection from some external threat.

EBA II is characterized by a complete architectural shift to rectangular structures, apparently signaling a sociocultural change. There is also possible evidence for some of the structures having a second story. There is no evidence for violent destruction at EBA II, but the site was abandoned at the end of the period. The black or dark grey burnished and incised pottery characteristic of the Yanik culture was made throughout most of EBA I, but it disappeared toward the end of the period, to be replaced in EBA II by highly burnished, fine-quality ware that still showed some typological affinities to the Yanik ware.

To the west of Lake Urmia, a number of sites with Yanik-related material culture have been explored, most notably Haftvan, Geoy, and Gijlar. The southernmost site in the western Urmia basin with distinct Yanik-related material is Gijlar Tepe, where Yanik culture's southward advance seems to have come to a halt. Along the eastern shore of Lake Urmia, however, Yanik culture continued its southward move through the Central Zagros all the way to Godin Tepe, where its Period IV is characterized by Yanik material.

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Little is known about the settlement pattern of the Yanik period. Besides the excavated sites mentioned above, Yanik-related shards are reported from Malayer Plain in the Central Zagros. Over a dozen sites with Yanik shards are reported from Hamadan Plain, of which two large ones seem to have been occupied only by users of this type of pottery. Kangavar Plain to the west of Hamadan has also yielded some sites with Yanik-related shards. Surveys in Mahidasht and Islamabad plains further in the Central Western Zagros, however, have failed to find any sites with Yanik-related material. Yanik-related shards seem to have made their way further to the south, probably not as a result of occupation but as imports; several shards have been picked up at Tepe Giyan, and a stratum with Yanik-related shards is reported from Chia Zard in Kuhdasht underlying Susa D material. Finally, a single piece of Yanik-related pottery may have been found in a Susa D context at Susa. To the east, at least one site with Yanik-related shards is reported from Qazvin Plain.

There is no argument that the Yanik culture is part of the broader Early Transcaucasian culture originating from the Caucasus and spreading southward into the northern Near East. Environmental change and population pressure are two main reasons put forward for this massive migration of people. Unfortunately, little is known about the ethnolinguistic affiliation of Early Transcaucasian people, but some scholars suggest that they were the ancestors of the people who later came to be called the Hurrians.

In addition to the Proto-Elamite and Yanik spheres, in the Early Bronze Age, parts of western and southwestern Iran, including Deh Luran Plain and Pusht-i Kuh, Luristan, were part of a scarlet-ware sphere that also included the Hamrin Basin and the Diyala Plain in central Mesopotamia. This sphere is characterized by the abundance of a typical polychrome (black and red on buff) painted pottery known as scarlet ware. It is interesting that glazed steatite seals, a distinct glyptic style associated with Proto-Elamite culture on stylistic and epigraphic grounds, occur in the scarlet-ware sphere of influence in abundance.

Middle Bronze Age on the Plateau (ca. 2200–1600 bce): Urbanism and Interregionalism

During the Middle Bronze Age, the Iranian Plateau experienced a short florescence of urbanism. Urban centers on the plateau, including Shahr-i Sokhteh, Hissar, Yahya, Shahdad, and Jiroft, were linked through an exchange network that connected the plateau with Central Asia, the southern coast of the Persian Gulf and the sea of Oman, Elam, and Mesopotamia. Highly desired commodities in this network included copper from central and southeastern Iran and Oman, lapis lazuli from Badakhshan in Afghanistan and Quetta in Pakistan, and stone from southwestern

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Iran and Oman. These materials reached their final destinations either in the form of raw material or as finished goods. Lapis lazuli workshops have been discovered at Shahr-i Sokhteh and Hissar, while Yahya and Jiroft seem to have been centers for carving various objects from steatite and chlorite. Many of these commodities were exported to western lands, especially to Mesopotamia, where the ruling elites used exotic goods to embellish the administrative and religious apparatus. But before we look at these urban centers, a brief consideration of the two major urban centers of the previous period, Malyan and Susa, is in order.

It seems that at the end of the Banesh phase (i.e., the end of the Early Bronze Age), the Proto-Elamite confederacy in Fars broke down into several small nomadic tribes. These entities are hard to detect archaeologically, but isolated cemeteries, like the one discovered at Jalyan ca. 150 km southeast of Shiraz, may have belonged to one of them. During the Middle Bronze Age, the Kaftari phase in the local chronology, Malyan expanded beyond the limits of the Late Banesh city wall. Very few remains of this phase have been excavated, including parts of a building that may have been used for some sort of administrative activity. Kaftari pottery shows some similarities to that of Susa IV and Godin III in Central Zagros, suggesting some sociocultural interaction. Examples of Kaftari pottery are found as far as Bushehr, and in Arabia on the southern side of the Persian Gulf.

Meanwhile, in the lowlands, during the Susa IV period, Susa once again became a city of Mesopotamian appearance, and its temples were embellished with stone statuary and plaques very much like those in Mesopotamia proper. Despite close cultural affiliation, it seems that Susa and its hinterland were not politically incorporated into Mesopotamian hegemony but controlled by "Mesopotamianized" locals, as evidenced by several individuals with Elamite names or backgrounds associated with the Elamite "dynasty" of Awan. The location of Awan remains a mystery, but somewhere in the Central or Southern Zagros is likely. The situation at Susa had changed by the time of the dynasty of Agade, when Sargon annexed Susa to his newly founded empire. His successors, however, granted the Susians some autonomy, and one of them, Naram-Sin, signed an alliance treaty—composed in the Elamite language and inscribed in cuneiform characters—with an unknown Elamite ruler of Susa.

With the collapse of the Akkadian Empire and the ensuing political chaos, kings of Awan gained momentum, and the last of them, Puzur-Inshushinak, presumably a contemporary of Ur-Namma, founder of the Third Dynasty of Ur, briefly established a polity that encompassed parts of the Zagros Mountains, the highlands of Fars, and Susiana. In Susa, Puzur-Inshushinak built and dedicated temples to Inshushinak, the supreme deity of Susa, and left behind monuments with dedicatory inscriptions in Akkadian and Linear Elamite script, a developed and apparently syllabic version of the earlier Proto-Elamite script. Puzur-Inshushinak's polity, however, did not last long, and, while Susiana was annexed to the empire of the Third Dynasty of Ur, a new dynasty was formed in the Elamite province of Shimashki, somewhere in the Zagros Mountains.

In the meantime, partly as a result of Akkadian incursions into the Central Zagros, tribal people of this region seem to have developed some form of small-scale

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polities. The most important of these people were the Gutians and Lulubians. A number of rock reliefs, especially one near Sar-i Pol-i Zohab in the western foothills of the Central Zagros showing Anubanini, a king of Lulubi, suggest that these people adopted some cultural features from Mesopotamia. The Gutians, on the other hand, were depicted by Mesopotamian sources as the scum of the earth, not surprising considering their role in bringing down the Akkadian Empire.

In the meantime, on the plateau, the two sites of Hissar and Shahr-i Sokhteh, presumably founded by Proto-Elamites, went their own way and grew enormously. At its height during the mid-third millennium BCE, Shahr-i Sokhteh, covering an area of more than 100 hectares, was most likely the seat of a little-known state in the Helmand basin. Shahr-i Sokhteh in this period was a well-organized, large town with an area for administrative and public buildings; industrial zones for various craft activities, including working with copper, lapis lazuli, chalcedony, turquoise, quartz, and flint; and residential neighborhoods occupied by people who buried their dead with elaborate grave goods in a vast necropolis on the outskirts of the town.

Hissar also expanded to become a large town during the Middle Bronze Age. Similarly, copper smelting and working with lapis lazuli were major craft activities at Hissar. Many rich burials dating to the third millennium suggest an affluent community. Studies of human remains from Hissar show that the female-to-male ratio was two to one and that 87 percent of the population died before the age of forty. Somewhat later, a large and well-built structure, about 30 × 15 m, was constructed at Hissar. This building contained a room that may have been a shrine, as well as many rich finds that suggest contacts with Altyn Tepe, a contemporary city in Turkmenistan. Traces of burning and the discovery of stone arrowheads and the charred bodies of men, women, and children sprawled on the floor indicate that the Hissar building was attacked and torched by some enemy.

Further to the northeast of Hissar, on the southeast corner of the Caspian Sea, another major Middle Bronze Age town flourished at Turang Tepe. The most important construction of this period at Turang Tepe was a large, two-stage mud-brick platform, some 80 m long and 13.5 m high. Similar platforms are also reported from Altyn Tepe in Turkmenistan and Mundigak in Afghanistan. Whether these platforms served a function similar to Mesopotamian ziggurats (the ziggurat of Ur was built at roughly the same time) remains an open question.

Further south, on the western edge of the Lut desert, Shahdad is another Middle Bronze Age urban center. Several seasons of excavations have revealed a large number of graves, mostly with spectacular grave goods, including curious human statuettes. Excavations in residential and industrial areas of Shahdad are also indicative of craft activities and interregional contact.

Another major Bronze Age center has recently been discovered in the Halil Rud basin in Jiroft. Ongoing excavations at Jiroft have revealed material dating to the Late Early to Middle Bronze Age, including structures containing sealings and a piece of an inscribed brick with a Linear Elamite inscription similar to those of Puzur-Inshushinak from Susa. These discoveries fall neatly in the dark era between the end of the Proto-Elamite period and the rise of the Old Elamite kingdoms.

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We can therefore hope that further excavations in Jiroft will shed more light on this crucial era in Iranian history.

While a lack of written documents from these urban centers on the plateau prevents us from exploring their ethnic and historical milieu, we can nonetheless argue that they may have been the seats of various polities such as Marahashi, Shimashki, Tukrish, or perhaps even the fabled land of Aratta mentioned in Mesopotamian texts of the third and early second millennium BCE.

The Middle Bronze Age urbanism and exchange network began to show signs of decline from the late third to early second millennium BCE. In most regions there seems to have been a general population decline. In Sistan, disaster struck and drastic climatic change and a shift in the course of the Helmand River transformed the late third millennium metropolis of Shahr-i Sokhteh into a small, declining village. In the northeastern plateau, Turang Tepe and Hissar continued to be occupied, but on a smaller scale. In the meantime, a new culture with a distinct gray pottery appeared in the northeastern corner of the plateau and took over sites in the Gurgan Plain such as Yarim Tepe and Tureng Tepe. By the middle of the second millennium, this culture arrived in the Central Plateau and further west in Hasanlu and Godin Tepe in the Zagros Mountains. This culture is traditionally attributed to Aryans or Iranian-speaking people.

Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age (ca. 1600 to 900 BCE): The Dark Era

Perhaps one of the thorniest questions in Iranian archaeology is the arrival of Iranian-speaking people in Iran. The transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age is usually described as marking the arrival of Iranian-speaking people, but the archaeological evidence for such a transition is a matter of debate, and the old hypotheses regarding the process of migration are in need of reassessment.

The Iranian-speaking people who settled in Iran were part of a larger and earlier group of people called Indo-Europeans whose original homeland has been a matter of debate among archaeologists and linguists since the nineteenth century. Recent arguments put the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans in eastern Anatolia, the nearby Caucasus, or the Pontic-Caspian steppes. Whatever its original homeland, it is generally assumed that this Proto-Indo-European community split into two branches, one migrating westward into Europe, forming the Indo-European-speaking people of that continent, while the other branch, usually called Indo-Iranian, migrated eastward, itself splitting into two groups, Iranian-speaking people and Vedic people. Two contemporary archaeological cultures have been proposed as representing these Indo-Iranians, the Andronovo culture of Central Asia and the Bactrian Margiana complex of Turkmenistan, but the archaeological signature of

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Indo-Iranians still remains elusive, demanding a more holistic approach incorporating archaeological, linguistic, and biological evidence.

The new culture with its distinct gray pottery that appeared in the northeastern plateau and took over sites in the Gurgan Plain is commonly believed to represent the gradual migration of these Iranian-speaking people into the Iranian Plateau. By the middle to late second millennium BCE, this culture penetrated into the Caspian Basin and the Central Plateau. Isolated cemeteries that these Early Iron Age people left behind in the northern and southern foothills of the Alborz Mountains suggest that they were nomadic and enjoyed a more or less tribal organization with little social differentiation. But in some areas, especially on the wooded coasts of the Caspian Sea in Gilan and Mazandaran, some tribes may have formed more complex, ranked organizations. Here, in a number of cemeteries such as Marlik, we find rich burials containing fine pottery, bronze weapons and objects, and vessels and ornaments of precious metals. Cemeteries like Marlik indicate ranking and perhaps even class differentiation among these people, but a better understanding of their social structure requires comparative mortuary remains from commoner cemeteries. Preliminary reports suggest that an elite residence belonging to these people once existed at the site of Pila Qal'eh not far from Marlik, but an assessment of its significance must await full publication of the excavation results.

Further to the west, in Azerbaijan, the introduction of the new culture coincides with a rather sudden change in material culture, sometimes with evidence of destruction, prompting some scholars to suggest a violent takeover of the region by Iranian-speaking people. For example, at Dinkha Tepe, the Bronze Age culture was succeeded by Iron Age material following a fire. A new architectural form at Hasanlu and Kordlar Tepe also marks a departure from the previous period, not to mention the pottery, predominantly gray but sometimes red, which both in fabric and form shares very little with local pottery of the previous period, but resembles early Iron Age pottery from the east.

Local conflict seems to have continued after the settlement of new people, but without evidence of any change in material culture. For example, sometime around 1200 BCE, a building of presumably elite function at Kordlar Tepe IV was burned. This may suggest that the new people split into smaller groups, forming tribal organizations whose competition over resources may have erupted into episodes of hostility and warfare.

Late Iron Age (ca. 900 to 559 BCE): Rise of New Polities

In the latter half of the Iron Age (ca. 900–559 BCE), major changes took place in western Iran, especially in the Zagros Mountains. It seems that Iranian-speaking people intermixed with local populations, as is evident from Iranian and non-Iranian

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names and words mentioned in Neo-Assyrian texts. By this time, some of these people may have formed small-scale polities that controlled pockets of land in the Zagros. Some information on a number of more important Zagros polities, such as the Mannaean kingdom on the southwestern shores of Lake Urmia and the kingdom of Ellipi, probably somewhere in Luristan, along with dozens of smaller polities, can be gleaned from Neo-Assyrian texts.

At this time, northwestern Iran, especially the area around Lake Urmia, was transformed into a battlefield between two major powers of the northern Near East, the Assyrians of northern Mesopotamia and the Urartians of eastern Anatolia. Colonial policy and conflict between these two empires left their impact on the archaeological remains from northwestern Iran. Fortresses like the one at Bastam were built by Urartians to protect the occupied territory from potential enemies, while settlements such as level IVB at Hasanlu were torched during military conflicts. Hasanlu was most probably the capital of a small kingdom, as Hasanlu IVB consisted of several large and well-built structures that might well be the palace of a local ruler because of the quality of the architecture and the rich finds discovered in the buildings. What stands out in the architecture of Hasanlu IVB is the emphasis on columned halls, a development from a smaller example from Hasanlu V and the forerunner of the later architectural complexes at Nush-i Jan and Godin and of the Achaemenid palatial complexes some two hundred years later. This continuity has been taken as a hallmark of an Iranian architectural tradition. Similar architectural features can be observed at hilltop forts excavated at Nush-i Jan, Godin Tepe, and Ziviyeh that may have been seats of different tribal leaders. Further to the east, other tribal people also undertook major constructions at sites such as Ozbaki and Sialk. While the buildings at Nush-i Jan, Godin, Ziviyeh, and Ozbaki were clearly forts, the construction at Sialk shows more ambitious designs, perhaps part of a monumental complex for a local ruler. Among these buildings, Nush-i Jan stands out as an interesting example because of a special construction that has been interpreted as a fire-temple, perhaps signaling the emergence of Iranian religious traditions.

Further to the south, Luristan may have been occupied by other tribal groups still preserving elements of pre-Iranian culture. Very little is known about the ethnic background of these people, but finds from their burials and buildings such as the "shrine" at Sorkh Dom suggest that they may have shared some cultural elements with Mesopotamians to the west and Elamites to the south.

Among numerous Zagros polities mentioned by the Assyrians were the relatively unimportant Medes, who were yet to play a crucial role in Near Eastern history. The Assyrians were in contact with the Medes from the time of Shalmaneser III (ca. 836 BCE), but Assyrian sources do not give the impression that they ever encountered a unified Median kingdom, but rather several small Median polities. Continuous Assyrian campaigns in the Central Zagros seem to have contributed to the coalescence of Median tribes into a confederacy, but the mechanisms leading to the rise of the Median hegemony over the Central Zagros remain unclear. Sometime after the last recorded Assyrian incursion into the Zagros in 658 BCE, a unified Median power was formed in the mountains. The Medes, depending on abundant

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highland resources and massive cavalry formations, attacked the Assyrian homeland in 614 BCE and in about four years, in alliance with the Chaldean dynasty of Babylon, destroyed the Assyrian Empire. With Assyria out of the picture, the Near East was divided between the Medes and the Babylonians. While the Babylonians annexed Syria and Palestine to their empire and arrived at the gates of Egypt, the Medes advanced in Anatolia, overran what was left of Urartu, and collided with the Lydians. After five years of war, finally brought to a halt by an eclipse in 585 BCE, the Median troops stopped at the River Halys.

Further south, in Fars, excavation at Operation EDD at Malyan revealed an Early Iron Age building of monumental scale, dated to the late Middle Elamite period, with evidence of elite activities and contact with the lowlands. Beyond the Middle Elamite enclave at Malyan, the rest of central Fars was occupied by communities of the little-known Qaleh culture. It has been suggested that the Shogha-Teimuran culture that succeeded the Qaleh and Middle Elamite cultures marks the arrival of Iranian-speaking people in Fars. If this is the case, then Iranian-speaking people, who later came to be known as the Persians, were settled in their new homeland some five centuries before their rise to power. It seems that, in the power vacuum created by the collapse of the Middle Elamite empire, these Iranian-speaking people gained a stronger foothold in Fars, a position they maintained through the following Neo-Elamite period. During several centuries of interaction with Elamites, these Iranian-speaking people had the opportunity to adopt many customs and traditions from the more complex Elamite society. From this Elamite-Iranian crucible emerged a young prince, Cyrus II, who around 559 BCE rebelled against the Medes. With the fall of the Median Empire, their territory fell into the hands of Cyrus, who soon moved to conquer Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Central Asia, laying the groundwork for the Achaemenid Empire.

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CHAPTER 2

THE ELAMITES

DANIEL T. POTTS

LESS well known to the general public than their Babylonian and Assyrian neighbors to the west, the Elamites were one of a number of groups inhabiting southwestern Iran between the Bronze Age and the early Islamic era. Longtime adversaries of the Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians, they are mentioned frequently in Mesopotamian cuneiform sources. For portions of their history, the Elamites were brought under direct Mesopotamian control; at other times, independent Elamite dynasties arose in what are today the Iranian provinces of Fars, Khuzistan, and southern Luristan. A dearth of local written sources in either Elamite, Sumerian, or Akkadian, a Semitic Mesopotamian language much used in the western Elamite area, makes reliance on foreign sources mandatory in order to knit together the political, social, and cultural history of this important region.

Before approaching the subject of Elam and the Elamites, a number of terms used here should be clarified. For the purposes of this chapter, Elamites will be defined as speakers and/or writers of the Elamite language who resided in southwestern Iran. Like Sumerian, to which it is completely unrelated, Elamite is a language which belongs to no known language family, although links with an hypothesized precursor (so-called Proto-Elamo-Dravidian) of the modern Dravidian languages—today mainly found in Baluchistan and Afghanistan (Brahui), North India and Nepal (Kurukh, Malto), and South India and northern Sri Lanka (e.g., Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, and Telugu)—have been tentatively suggested. It must be acknowledged, however, that there may have been non-Elamite-speaking groups living either in southwestern Iran or in neighboring parts of Iran who used Elamite for writing but identified themselves by another ethnic name. Moreover, it should be recognized that some of the individuals mentioned in cuneiform sources who bear Elamite names may not have considered themselves Elamite, just as some individuals who

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had non-Elamite names and have therefore been classified as members of non-Elamite groups may well have been Elamites.

These considerations are important to bear in mind when trying to determine the approximate boundaries of Elam at various points in its history, all the more so since the historical geography of western Iran is so poorly understood. Mesopotamian cuneiform sources and, to a lesser extent, Elamite texts mention dozens of geographical names, both of "countries" and of towns or cities, which we are unable to locate, even if the context in which they are mentioned often gives us a broad clue as to their rough location. It is possible to linguistically analyze the personal names of individuals said to come from regions such as Marhashi, Sherihum, Bashime, Shimashki, Zabshali, etc., but the result is almost always a mixture of names that are classifiable as Elamite and non-Elamite. Often those falling into the latter category have no known linguistic affiliation, suggesting that the language group to which they belonged is now extinct and was never well enough represented in the cuneiform sources to be identifiable (as was the case with Amorite, for which we have no written sources). All of this suggests, however, that southwestern Iran was linguistically and culturally diverse, even if the Elamites were the dominant group in the region prior to the rise of the Achaemenid Persian Empire.

The area in which the Elamites lived—Khuzistan, southern Luristan, and Fars—is environmentally diverse. The alluvial plains of central and western Khuzistan, where the Karkheh, Dez, Shureh, and Karun rivers drain a largely flat landscape, are broken only by the Haft Tepe and Dezful anticlines. In an area that receives under 300 mm of rainfall annually, these rivers provide vital sources of water for irrigation agriculture as well as routes for watercraft leading to the Persian Gulf, important both for fishing and for trading. Temperatures in Khuzistan can hit 60°C in the summer, which is why migration between the lowlands and the higher, intermontane valleys of the great Zagros mountain chain to the north has been a feature of life for thousands of years. With their much richer biomass, higher rainfall, and cooler climate, the Zagros valleys of southern Luristan and western Fars offer almost limitless opportunities for a mixed economy based on sheep and goat herding and farming. East of the Karun River, the ground rises slowly as one moves towards Ram Hormuz and Behbehan, and east of Gachsaran and Dogonbadan a true highland environment appears, punctuated by numerous springs and agriculturally rich valleys. Continuing eastward, where the valleys exceed an elevation of 1,000 m above sea level, the environment becomes more arid, but at the same time, the cultural landscape loses nothing of its vitality, as shown by the Marv-Dasht plain, northwest of Shiraz, which was home not only to important prehistoric sites such as Tal-e Mushki, Tal-e Jarri, and Tal-e Bakun and to the Achaemenid capital of Persepolis, but also to the important Elamite center of Anshan, modern Tal-e Malyan.

Archaeological excavations were initiated in southwestern Iran during the 1850s, and over the years many sites have been located. Relatively few, however, have been excavated extensively. The most important excavated sites with Elamite remains are, moving from west to east:

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- Tepe Farukhabad: a small mound in the Deh Luran plain of northeastern Khuzistan at which ceramics comparable to those found at other Elamite sites during the third and second millennia BCE have been recovered within a relatively limited area of excavation
- Shush: ancient Shushan, commonly known as Susa, the name given to it by the ancient Greeks, on the Shaur River, a former bed of the Karkheh, known in antiquity as the Ula (Elamite) or Ulaya (Akkadian) river; Susa functioned in many periods as the lowland capital of the Elamites
- Haft Tepe: about 10 km south of Susa; Haft Tepe was probably ancient Kab(i)nak, a major Elamite settlement associated with the Elamite king Tepti-Ahar in the fifteenth century BCE
- Chogha Zambil: a major religious center on the Dez River established by Untash-Napirisha (mid-fourteenth century BCE)
- Tal-e Malyan: ancient Anshan, a large, low mound covering approximately 100 ha in the Kur River drainage area of the Marv-Dasht plain, Fars; Anshan was the principal highland capital of the Elamites throughout much of their history

In addition to these excavated sites, important rock reliefs, carved by various Elamite kings and sometimes flanked by accompanying inscriptions, have been discovered in eastern Khuzistan (Izeh/Malamir region) at Kul-e Farah and Shikaft-e Salman and in Fars at Kurangun and Naqsh-e Rostam. Finally, random finds of Elamite inscribed bricks have been made on the surface of numerous sites (e.g. Tul-e Afghani, Deh-e Now, Chogha Pahn, Tepe Gotvand), while chance discoveries brought to light by earthmoving equipment at Arjan, near Behbehan, have revealed a richly furnished royal tomb from the sixth century BCE.

Political History

For the purposes of this chapter, the Elamite period in southwestern Iran will be taken to extend from ca. 2500 BCE to the beginning of the Achaemenid Persian Empire in 539 BCE, even though there is evidence for the continued existence of the Elamites as an important ethnic group in southwestern Iran during the Achaemenid and Parthian periods and for the use of Elamite as a spoken language in Khuzistan in the medieval era.

We cannot say for certain whether the Elamites always lived in southwestern Iran, for we cannot justifiably use the term Elamite to describe the archaeological assemblages of any of the excavated prehistoric sites in Khuzistan (e.g., Ali Kosh, Tepe Sabz, and Chogha Mish) or in Fars (e.g., Tal-e Mushki, Tal-e Jarri, Tal-e Nurabad, Tol-e Spid, and Tal-e Bakun) since we have no way of knowing whether their inhabitants spoke Elamite. The protocuneiform texts from Uruk and Jemdet

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Nasr in southern Mesopotamia (Uruk III period, ca. 3200–3000 BCE) contain a toponym written NIM.KI that, by analogy with later Sumerian usage, may refer to Elam, and it is fairly certain that by ca. 2600 BCE the lexical texts from Abu Salabikh, another scribal center not far from Nippur, employed the term in exactly this sense, for they also contain a definite reference to the chief deity of Susa, Inshushinak (*nin-šušinak*), and to *lugal-aratta*, the eponymous deity of a semimythical eastern region, Aratta, attested only in Sumerian literary sources. A geographical text of about the same date known as the List of Geographical Names, copies of which have been found both at Abu Salabikh and at Ebla in Syria, mentions a region called URUxA or *ar-ù/a-ra-wa*. Thought to have been located somewhere in western Iran, URUxA is described as the "bolt of Elam" (*sag-kul*-NIM), suggesting that the town occupied a vital position on the road eastward to Elam.

The oldest source that may reflect the existence of a polity called Elam is the *Sumerian King List*, where it is said that Elam was attacked by Enmebaragesi, first king of the First Dynasty of Kish, and that Awan, a neighbor of Elam's, some of whose rulers had Elamite names, conquered Ur. Unfortunately, recent scholarship has called into question the existence of a king named Enmebaragesi as well as the historicity of much of the pre-Akkadian portion of the *Sumerian King List*. When we come to the reign (ca. 2460 BCE) of Eannatum of Lagash, however, we are on firmer ground, for Eannatum's inscriptions suggest that he campaigned at least twice against Elam, in one case reaching the region of Mishime, thought to have been located along the northeast coast of the Persian Gulf, perhaps between Bushehr and the Shatt al-Arab.

While the sources just reviewed date to a period in which Mesopotamia was characterized by a plurality of city-states, the period around 2350 BCE saw the emergence of the first unitary Mesopotamian state under Sargon of Akkad (2334–2279 BCE) and the extension of his conquests from Babylonia to Anatolia and Syria in the north and Iran in the east. Sargon campaigned against URUxA, "the bolt of Elam," in the first year of his reign and against Elam in his second year. Later copies of Sargon's inscriptions, dating to the early second millennium BCE, indicate that he also campaigned against Sherihum, possibly located along the Persian Gulf coast below Mishime; Susa itself; Awan; Barahshum/Marhashi, now known to have been situated in eastern Iran around the Jiroft plain; and numerous other regions that have yet to be identified. Sargon's sons, Rimush (2278–2270 BCE) and Manishtushu (2269–2255 BCE), as well as his grandson Naram-Sin (2254–2218 BCE), all campaigned against Elam, but from the reign of Manishtushu to the early part of the reign of Shar-kali-sharri (2217–2193 BCE), Akkadian governors were installed at Susa, which may have served as a bridgehead for Akkadian attacks in the area. Moreover, from the reign of Naram-Sin, we have a unique Elamite text from Susa, a treaty between an unnamed ruler and the Akkadian king. Although several scholars have hypothesized that the unnamed ruler was Hita, eleventh king of Awan according to a list of kings of Awan and Shimashki also found at Susa, this is pure speculation. In §3, the unnamed king is made to state, "Naram-Sin's enemy is also my enemy, Naram-Sin's

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friend is also my friend," while in §7 he promises to defend the treaty and not to tolerate any anti-Akkadian activity in Elam.

Sargon's great-grandson, Shar-kali-sharri, may have defeated Elam in battle, but he did so in the center of Babylonia, a clear indication that the political and military fortunes of Elam and Akkad were changing during the late Akkadian period. As we know from several sources, the Akkadian Empire was brought down not long after Shar-kali-sharri's reign by the Guti, a people hailing from the region of Gutium, usually located in some part of the northwestern Zagros Mountains of western Iran (perhaps in Kurdistan or Azerbaijan). Just what the relationship between Elam and Gutium may have been at this point, we cannot say. It is probable, however, that the power vacuum created by the collapse of the Akkadian Empire benefited an independent Elam, for Ur-Namma (2112–2095 BCE), the founder of Akkad's successor, the Third Dynasty of Ur, lists Puzur-Inshushinak, titled "king of Elam," as one of his adversaries in an inscription found at Isin.

Puzur-Inshushinak is the first historical figure to emerge in Elamite history. Twelve of his own inscriptions have been found at Susa, and these call him alternately governor (*ensí*) of Susa, GÌR.NÍTA (vassal? military governor?) of Elam, and king (*lugal*) of Awan. It is tempting to think that the different titles assumed by Puzur-Inshushinak in fact replicate his gradual ascent from governor of Susa in the late Akkadian period to eventual king of Elam and/or Awan around 2100 BCE. The Isin inscription tells us that Puzur-Inshushinak enslaved the cities of southern Mesopotamia, while he himself claims to have conquered eighty-one towns or cities in Iran. He was, however, eventually defeated by Ur-Namma, who went on to found the Third Dynasty of Ur (2112–2004 BCE), and it may have been by collaborating in the reconquest of southern Mesopotamia that Gudea, a famous governor of the city-state of Lagash, could justify stating in his own inscriptions that he "smote the city of Anshan in/of Elam" (Statue B vi 64–69).

The rise of the Ur III state ushered in another period in which Susa, more than any other part of Elam, was under the direct rule of governors from Ur. During this time, Susa was required to pay *gún ma-da* or "tax of the province" to Ur. Areas further east such as Marhashi, Anshan, Pashime (i.e., Mishime), and Zabshali were, however, treated differently. Over the course of the twenty-first century BCE, records of marriages between daughters of three Ur III kings—Shulgi, Shu-Sin, and Ibbi-Sin—and the leaders of Marhashi, Anshan, Pashime, and Zabshali alternate with those of campaigns against and the arrival of ambassadors from the very same places. Such a schizophrenic relationship is scarcely unique in history, for Renaissance and early modern Europe abounds with examples of diplomatic or interdynastic marriages followed by brutal wars. It is clear, however, that Ur's strategies for dealing with her eastern neighbors were doomed to failure.

In the forty-seventh year of the reign of Shulgi (2094–2047 BCE), booty from Shimashki was received at Puzrish-Dagan, presumably the spoils of a campaign against this northern neighbor of Elam's, described in one text as extending "from the border of Anshan to the Upper Sea,"[1] in this case almost certainly the Caspian (rather than the Mediterranean, commonly referred to as the "Upper Sea"). Before

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long, however, the relative positions of Ur and Shimashki would be reversed. The middle years of the reign of Ibbi-Sin (2028–2004 BCE) saw the last king of the Ur III dynasty campaigning relentlessly against Huhnur, described as the "bolt of Anshan" (year 9); Susa, Adamdun, and Awan (year 14); and finally Shimashki and Elam (year 16 or 22). In his twenty-second year on the throne, the "stupid monkey in the foreign land struck against Ibbi-Sin, the king of Ur." A year later (2004 BCE), Ur was attacked by a combined Elamite-Shimashkian force and the last king of the Ur III dynasty was hauled off to Anshan as a prisoner, never to be heard of again. Thus ended the Third Dynasty of Ur, undoubtedly the most centralized and powerful state the world had yet seen. As we learn from a later hymn to Ishbi-Erra (2017–1985 BCE), founder of the First Dynasty of Isin, the man who led the invading Elamite-Shimashkian army was one Kindattu, apparently the same person who appears in the Awan and Shimashki king list as the sixth king of Shimashki (although there is some question as to whether these "king lists" are chronologically sequential or merely a collection of names of rulers, some of whom may have been contemporary).

Like the Guti before them, the forces of Shimashki and Elam did not occupy Mesopotamia for very long. According to the hymn in his honor from Isin, Ishbi-Erra drove Kindattu out of Mesopotamia, although the circumstances of his retreat are unclear. Excavations at Susa, however, have yielded cuneiform tablets and legends on cylinder seals naming a number of "kings" of Shimashki attested in the king list, including Tan-Ruhurater, Kindadu (i.e., Kindattu), Idadu (i.e., Idaddu), and Imazu, and further "kings" of Shimashki appear in Ur III texts, beginning with Tazitta, second king of Shimashki according to the king list, who is mentioned in a text dated to the year Amar-Sin 8; Girnamme, first king of Shimashki, who is mentioned in a text dated to the year Shu-Sin 6; and Ebarti I, third king of Shimashki, who is mentioned in the same year. In addition, we have several other synchronisms that help us place the later kings of Shimashki. For example, Tan-Ruhurater, eighth king of Shimashki, was married to a daughter of Bilalama, the independent ruler (*ensí*) of Eshnunna (in northeastern Babylonia) and contemporary of Shu-Ilishu of Isin (1984–1975 BCE), while Idaddu-Napir, eleventh king of Shimashki, lived during the reign of Sumuabum of Babylon (1894–1881 BCE). The fact that Matum-niatum, a daughter of Iddin-Dagan (1974–1954 BCE) of Isin, was married to an unnamed "king of Anshan," possibly identified as Kindattu's son Imazu, whose seal legend called him by this title, suggests that relations between the rulers of Shimashki and the powers at Eshnunna and Isin were cordial or at least no longer overtly hostile.

But any understanding of the "kingdom of Shimashki" is made more difficult by the fact that, in addition to appearing in the Shimashki king lists, these same individuals are mentioned elsewhere with a variety of titles, including king of Anshan (Imazu), governor of Susa (Idaddu I, Tan-Ruhurater, Idaddu II), GÌR.NÍTA of Elam (Idaddu I), king of Shimashki and Elam (Idaddu I), king of Anshan and Susa (Ebarti II), and simply "king" (Ebarti II). How, therefore, we should understand the "dynasty of Shimashki" remains very much an open question, but the fact

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that Susa had been liberated from its Mesopotamian overlords and Shimashkian rulers from the Iranian Plateau had occupied their place in the lowlands of Khuzistan suggests that a major restructuring of political power had taken place in southwestern Iran following the end of the Ur III period. Since Shu-Sin's year formula ascribes to Shimashki over half a dozen different "lands," it is plausible to suggest that, as a political force, Shimashki was a confederation of allies, united in the first instance to oust an aggressive Mesopotamian presence, rather than a unitary state. This may, in part, explain the very diverse titulature given to the rulers of this period and serve as a counterbalance to the image of a sequential succession of dynasts suggested by the Shimashki king list from Susa.

The relative state of calm that obtained between Elam and her western neighbors ended when Gungunum (1932–1906 BCE) became the fifth king of Larsa. After attacking and destroying Bashime in his third year, he launched an assault on Anshan in his fifth year. Whether this helped bring about the end of the "Shimashkian" period and usher in what has come to be referred to as the *sukkalmah* period (ca. 1900–1600 BCE) in southwestern Iran is difficult to say, but it is certainly a possibility. The title *sukkalmah*, which may be roughly translated as "prime minister" or "grand vizier," first appeared in the pre-Sargonic texts of Girsu, in southern Mesopotamia, and may have been adopted at Susa because of the fact that, in the Ur III period, the control of Ur's eastern frontier was the responsibility of the *sukkalmah* of the city-state Lagash (the capital of which was Girsu). Beginning with Shilhaha, thought to have been a son of Ebarti II, ninth king in the Shimashki king list, a succession of rulers at Susa took the titles *sukkalmah*, *sukkal* of Elam, *sukkal* of Susa, and *sukkal* of Elam, Shimashki, and Susa. It has been suggested by some scholars that princes served first as *sukkal*, or "minister," of Susa; then as *sukkal* of Elam, Shimashki, and Susa; and finally as *sukkalmah*, but it is not clear that this was always the case.

Larsa's continued aggression may have been the catalyst for an eventual alliance between Zambija of Isin (1836–1834 BCE) and Elam, commemorated in the year formula of Sin-iqisham of Larsa (1840–1836 BCE) who, in his fifth year, defeated "Uruk, Kazallu, the army of the land of Elam, and Zambija the king of Isin." Shortly thereafter, however, Larsa was conquered by one Kudur-mapuk, described as "sheikh" or "father" of Yamutbal, an area considered Amorite on the western edge of Elam (eastern Tigris region), but one which seems to have been closely linked with Elam, to judge by the fact that Kudur-mapuk and later rulers of the new Yamutbal-Larsa dynasty all had Elamite names.

Half a century later, however, we see evidence of the political might of the *sukkalmahs* for the first time when Shiruk-tuh provided 12,000 men as part of a joint operation involving Assyria, Eshnunna, and the Turukkeans (a people living somewhere in the northern Zagros) against the Guti. Shortly afterward, moreover, a letter from an official in the service of Rim-Sin (1822–1763 BCE), last of the kings of Larsa, tells us that Rim-Sin sent envoys "to the great king of Elam," and from the early eighteenth century BCE onward the power of Elam seems to have been on the rise. Whether this was facilitated by the death of Shamshi-Adad (1813–1781 BCE), founder of the Old Assyrian Empire, is unclear, but it seems likely. An alliance

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comprised of Elam, Babylon, and Mari defeated the powerful kingdom of Eshnunna in the east Tigris area, and letters between the *sukkalmah* and Hammurabi of Babylon (1792–1750 BCE) make it clear that the Elamites were the greatest power of the day. Significantly, in the royal correspondence of Mari, the Elamite *sukkalmah* is referred to as "father," whereas all of the rulers of the Syrian states (e.g., Aleppo, Qatna, Mari) and Babylon address each other as "brother." Envoys and gifts moved freely between Elam and Mari, and tin, acquired at Susa, was redistributed by the king of Mari to his vassals in Syria.

This "golden age" of *sukkalmah* supremacy, however, was to be short-lived. When Hammurabi occupied several cities in the frontier between the kingdom of Babylon and the now defunct kingdom of Eshnunna, he was threatened by Siwe-palar-huppak of Elam, who laid claim to them himself. There followed a demand by the *sukkalmah* to the king of Mari that he break off relations with Hammurabi. Instead, Mari, Babylon, and the kingdom of Aleppo formed a new alliance, documented in an oath preserved at Mari between Zimri-Lim and Hammurabi. In 1764/3 BCE, Hammurabi met and defeated an Elamite army that included contingents from Marhashi, Subartu, Gutium, Eshnunna, and Malgium, and thereafter we hear very little of the *sukkalmahs*, even though the dynasty is thought to have lasted well into the sixteenth and possibly even into the fifteenth century BCE.

Between ca. 1500 and 1400 BCE, we have the names of five rulers at Susa—Kidinu, Tan-Ruhurater II, Shalla, Tepti-Ahar, and Inshushinak-shar-ilani—and although there is no clear proof that they were all related, this group has come to be called the Kidinuids. In them we recognize the first "dynasty" of the so-called Middle Elamite period (Middle Elamite I). With the exception of Inshushinak-shar-ilani, who simply called himself "king," the rest of this group used the title "king of Susa and Anzan" (cf. Anshan). The best known of the Kidinuids is certainly Tepti-Ahar, who either founded or refounded Kab(i)nak, modern Haft Tepe, where he may have been buried in a large, barrel-vaulted tomb, part of a building complex excavated between 1965 and 1978 by E. O. Negahban.

The second dynasty of the Middle Elamite period (Middle Elamite II) is known as the Igihalkids after Igihalki, an individual known from inscribed bricks found at the large, unexcavated site of Deh-e Now. As Igihalki mentions no ancestors but attributes his rule over Susa and Anshan to the goddess Manzat, possibly the city goddess of Deh-e Now, it is possible that his dynasty came from that city and that Igihalki seized power from the Kidinuids following a coup d'état. Whatever the truth may be, the Igihalkids quickly forged links with the Kassites, the ruling dynasty in Babylonia at that time. According to an important text known as the "Berlin letter" (VAT 17020 in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin), Igihalki's son Pahir-ishshan was the first of at least four members of this dynasty to marry a Kassite princess. These marriages commenced with the sister or daughter of either Kurigalzu I (dates uncertain) or II (1332–1308 BCE), and ended with the daughter of Melishihu (1186–1172 BCE).

One of the Igihalkids, Untash-Napirisha, founded the site of Al Untash-Napirisha, modern Chogha Zambil, an enormous city covering ca. 100 ha, with an outer perimeter wall more than 4 km long enclosing an inner, walled ceremonial

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center containing numerous temples and a Mesopotamian-like ziggurat or temple tower. According to a Babylonian source (Babylonian Chronicle P), one of Untash-Napirisha's descendants, a king named Kidin-Hutran, attacked and destroyed Der, on the eastern frontier of Babylonia, before moving on to Nippur, which he captured in 1224 BCE. In the process, Kidin-Hutran overthrew Enlil-nadin-shumi, a puppet put on the Kassite throne by Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243–1207 BCE) of Assyria. Several years later, Kidin-Hutran attacked another Assyrian appointee to the Kassite throne, Adad-shuma-iddina (1222–1217 BCE).

The death of Kidin-Hutran seems to have brought an end to the Igihalkid dynasty. The next "king of Anshan and Susa" was Shutruk-Nahhunte, and the dynasty that he founded is known as the Shutrukids (Middle Elamite III). As we know from the Berlin letter, Shutruk-Nahhunte was married to the daughter of the Kassite king Melishihu (1186–1172 BCE). In the letter, Shutruk-Nahhunte stakes a claim to the Kassite throne on the basis of his ancestors' intermarriage with Kassite nobility, claiming to be a more legitimate heir to the throne than the incumbent, Zababa-shuma-iddina. Having failed to receive a proper response to the "sincere proposal" made in the letter, Shutruk-Nahhunte carried out his threat to invade Babylonia in 1158 BCE, and in so doing not only overthrew his Kassite rival but brought about the end of the dynasty once and for all. Soon afterward, he installed his son, Kutir-Nahhunte, on the Babylonian throne. Among the booty brought back to Susa by Shutruk-Nahhunte were such pieces as the stele containing the law code of Hammurabi; the victory stele of Naram-Sin; and other well-known Akkadian, Ur III, Old Babylonian, and Kassite stone stelae and sculptures, all of which were discovered at Susa to the great surprise of the early French excavators there. Kutir-Nahhunte's brother, Shilhak-Inshushinak, also campaigned vigorously in the east Tigris-Assyrian region during his reign (ca. 1150–1120 BCE), attacking some well-known cities there such as Nuzi and Arrapha.

According to several later literary sources, Nebuchadnezzar I (1125–1104 BCE), fourth king of the Second Dynasty of Isin, was commanded by the Babylonian god Marduk to liberate the god, whose cult statue had been taken from Babylon to Elam by Kutir-Nahhunte. After an initially unsuccessful campaign that culminated in a defeat by the banks of the Uqnu river (the eastern arm of the Tigris), Nebuchadnezzar regrouped and engaged the Elamite king, Hutelutush-Inshushinak, in battle by the Ula (Karkheh) river, forcing his retreat and seizing control of Elam. Thus ended the reign of the Shutrukids and the Middle Elamite period, although evidence suggests that Hutelutush-Inshushinak, said to have disappeared in a later text written in the form of a letter from Nebuchadnezzar I to the inhabitants of Babylon, may have survived for some years longer in the highlands, beyond the reach of the Babylonian king's army. Inscribed bricks testifying to Hutelutush-Inshushinak's building activity have been found at both Tal-e Malyan, in Fars, and Tul-e Afghani, in the Bakhtiari mountains.

The following period is known as the Neo-Elamite period. We have few sources for Elamite political history until the eighth century BCE. An "Elamite Dynasty" consisting of only a single ruler, Mar-biti-apla-usur (984–979 BCE), is attested in the

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Dynastic Chronicle, but we know nothing about it. Assyrian sources on campaigns by Assurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE) and Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE) in the Zagros against Zamua, Ellipi, and numerous other regions never mention Elam, although an Elamite ambassador at the court of Adad-nirari III (911–891 BCE) is mentioned in 784 BCE. Indeed it was not until the reign of Sargon II (721–705 BCE) that Elam began to appear in Assyrian annals. From this time until the middle of the seventh century, Elam figured prominently as an ally of Babylonia's against Assyria, particularly as a supporter of the Chaldean chieftain Merodach-Baladan II (721–710 BCE), and Susa and its foreland were often on the receiving end of Assyrian attacks. Unfortunately, we know the details of this history almost exclusively from the Assyrian perspective, complemented by evidence from Babylonian chronicles that give us Babylonianized names of numerous Elamite rulers. The history of this era is further complicated, moreover, by the fact that there were obviously homonymous Elamite rulers, some of whom were factional leaders recognized by the Assyrians but not by the Elamites themselves. Sargon II, Sennacherib (704–681 BCE), Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE), and finally Assurbanipal (668–627 BCE) all campaigned vigorously against the Elamites, mainly because of the fact that they regularly provided assistance or shelter to the Babylonian and Chaldean enemies of Assyria. This long-drawn-out conflict achieved one climax in 653 BCE, when Assurbanipal's army met the Elamites under their king Te-umman, whom it defeated. Te-umman was beheaded, and the scenes of this campaign, including the image of Te-umman's head dangling from a tree in Assurbanipal's garden, decorated two of the palaces used by Assurbanipal at Nineveh. Thereafter, Elam became a client state with an Assyrian appointee on the throne, but ongoing Elamite resistance, involving Elamite support for Assurbanipal's rebellious brother Shamash-shum-ukkin (667–648 BCE), led to further Assyrian campaigns against Elam, culminating in the devastation of much of Khuzistan, the sack of Susa, and the desecration of the Elamite royal tombs there in 647 BCE.

In comparison with the previous 150 years, the period between 647 and 549 BCE, when Cyrus entered Babylon and the Persian Empire was born, is poorly understood. Evidence that Elam became an Assyrian province soon after Assurbanipal's destruction of Susa is equivocal at best. Nor is it clear what role Elam played vis-à-vis the growing power of Babylonia or that of Media. A small number of cylinder seals with Elamite legends such as "Huban-kitin, son of king Shutur-Nahhunte" are suggestive of a late Neo-Elamite renaissance at this time. A fragmentary limestone stele from Susa refers to "Atta-hamiti-Inshushinak, son of Hutran-tepti, king of Anshan and Susa," and refers to a building begun by a king Halkatash, a contemporary of Hutran-tepti, but apart from names such as these we have no idea of what was actually going on at this time. It seems certain, however, that the unified kingdom of Susa and Anshan no longer existed, for in addition to the kings whose names are associated with Susa, we also find references to a king named Shutur-Nahhunte at Kul-e Farah, near Malamir (ancient Aiyapir); to four kings of Samati, named on a series of silver vessels from the Kalmakarreh hoard discovered near Pol-e Dokhtar, in southern Luristan; and to a series of kings of Anshan, named as Cyrus's ancestors on the Cyrus Cylinder from Babylon. In addition, a richly furnished tomb found at

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Arjan, near Behbehan, contained a gold object inscribed with the legend "Kidin-Hutran, son of Kurlush," and this probably relates to yet another local dynasty. The impression, therefore, in the immediately pre-Persian period, is one of political plurality in Elam, rather than unity. Out of this climate, as we know, the Persian Empire emerged. But it is important to remember that, notwithstanding the account given by Herodotus, Cyrus (which is merely the Latinized form of Greek Kyros) was always called Kurash in the Babylonian sources, and many scholars now think that this is most probably an Elamite name. If such is the case, then it makes the statement that Cyrus's ancestors, beginning with Teispes, were "kings of Anshan" all the more plausible, and this, in turn, would suggest that the empire created by Cyrus was an Elamite one that only became "Persian" or "Achaemenid" with the ascension of Darius.

Social History

The nature and number of both local and Mesopotamian sources available on Elam have meant that Elamite society has scarcely been researched to date. The most we can do is to comment on those few insights into society and social organization that are available, while acknowledging that they in no way combine to allow us to begin to offer a sketch of Elamite society in even a perfunctory fashion.

As the cursory review of Elamite political history given above should have made clear, Susa bore the brunt of Mesopotamian military aggression for nearly 2,000 years, and therefore of the many political rearrangements that must have followed as a consequence. This meant, among other things, that Susa was administered for much of the late third millennium BCE by Akkadian, and later Ur III, officials. Even in those periods of independence, however, Susa's proximity to the major urban centers of southern Mesopotamia exposed the city to a higher degree of Mesopotamian influence than her highland neighbors like Anshan, Shimashki, and Marhashi.

We can detect Mesopotamian influence at Susa in a number of ways. From the late third millennium onward, Sumerian and later Akkadian were the most commonly used written languages at the site, whereas at Anshan, to the limited extent that we can form a judgment based on the Tal-e Malyan excavations, Elamite was dominant. Several archives have been found at Susa, but it is interesting to note that whereas Mesopotamian texts were dated by year, the Susian texts were dated by month according to a twelve-month calendar (1. *Addaru*; 2. *ser'i sa esedi*, "the furrow [ready] for reaping"; 3. *Pit babi*, "the opening of the gate," referring to a ritual or festival, perhaps when the cult statue of a deity left his or her temple to make a public appearance; 4. DINGIR.MAH; 5. *Abu*; 6. *Lallubu*; 7. *Sibitu*, "the seventh"; 8. *ser'i sa eresi*, "the furrow of the seeding"; 9. *Tamhiru*; 10. *Sililitu*; 11. *Hultuppu*, "the demons go out"; 12. *Sabatu*) that differed somewhat from the calendar attested at Tal-e Malyan during the Middle Elamite period.

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Other indications exist of the penetration of Mesopotamian influence in Khuzistan. Thus, the worship of Mesopotamian deities (many names containing the theophoric element Adad are attested, for example) was particularly prevalent at Susa and Chogha Zambil, as compared to the highlands, where the worship of Elamite deities predominated. Susa texts from the reign of Tepti-ahar, moreover, speak of female guardians sleeping at the feet of protective spirits (*lamassati* and *karibati*), another Mesopotamian feature. Personal names attested in cuneiform texts at Susa (quite possibly a skewed sample, however) during the late third millennium were also overwhelmingly Akkadian, just as the names of Susians in Mesopotamia mentioned in Old Akkadian texts were largely Semitic, not Elamite. Elamites in Mesopotamia who were not specifically said to have come from Susa did, however, bear linguistically Elamite names. Material culture at Susa in the late third millennium also showed strong Mesopotamian influence, whether in the iconography of cylinder seals or in the styles and shapes of pottery.

Despite over a century of excavation by French archaeologists at Susa, we are surprisingly ill informed about burial practices in Elam. In an article published in 1944, Roland de Mecquenem noted the presence of tablets in some graves at Susa that contained mortuary "prayers," but no further information is available on this point. Another group of graves located close to the later palace of Darius contained tablets with invocations to the *Anunnaku*, a Mesopotamian designation used particularly for the 600 gods of the underworld. In other texts from the same group, however, the Elamite deities Ishmekarab, Lagamal, and, particularly, Inshushinak are invoked. In spite of this, however, it is clear that the ideology evoked by these texts was heavily influenced by Babylonian customs. On the other hand, some scholars believe that the triad Inshushinak-Ishmekarab-Lagamal represented in these sources may be a precursor of a very different tradition, one that is parallel to the later Mazdean triad of Mithra-Sraosha-Rashnu in Zoroastrianism.

In the review of Elamite political history given above, reference was made to interdynastic marriages between the Akkadian and Ur III royal families and those of Anshan, Marhashi, Pashime, and Zabshali, as well as to intermarriage between the Kassites and some of the Middle Elamite Igihalkids and Shutrukids. Such marriages were undoubtedly of little relevance to the bulk of society, just as marriages between the royal houses of Europe have been in more recent times. There is, however, an aspect of Elamite marriage and filiation that has long puzzled scholars. During the early second millennium BCE the term *ruhushak,* or "sister's son," was applied to many of the *sukkals* and *sukkalmahs* whose names have come down to us. Many were called "sister's son of Shilhaha," while smaller numbers were identified as sister's son of Shiruktuh, Temti-Agun, Kuk-Nashur, and Tan-Uli. Scholars have debated whether the term signified genuine descent from an incestuous royal marriage between siblings, descent from a father and a mother where the mother was not of the same social group but was accorded the juridical rights of that group as though she were a sister of her husband, or descent from a remote ancestor who was thereby indicated as "sister's son." Discussion has even focused on the issue of whether the term represents a residual element of a one-time matriarchal system in Elam.

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To date, none of the explanations put forward is completely satisfactory, but it is likely that *ruhushak* is a term of kinship affiliation that had special meaning in the Elamite social system.

At Susa a variety of legal, economic, literary, and scholarly texts (e.g., omens) have been found that for the most part conform to Mesopotamian conventions. In the legal realm, however, there were certain differences between praxis in Elam and elsewhere. For many years, it was believed that a group of texts from Susa written in Akkadian reflected the existence of an ordeal by water, comparable to that known in Mesopotamia and the Hittite world. In fact, while there was certainly some kind of "water procedure" involving an individual "going to the water," this was not a true ordeal. A second group of texts involved a litigant voluntarily "taking the waters." In this case the individual may have drunk a draft of liquid in the course of pressing his or her claim.

Cultural History

Despite the fact that archaeological excavations at Elamite sites have been restricted to a handful of sites, we are reasonably well informed about the development of material culture over time. The predominant types of material recovered in excavation include ceramics, stone tools, terracotta figurines, cylinder seals and sealings, metal weaponry, and stone vessels. But there are other categories that are distinctively Elamite, and it is to these that we now turn. Some of these have been found in excavation, while others are illustrated on cylinder seals and reliefs or, in some cases, mentioned only in written sources.

One of the most intriguing developments in material culture is attested almost exclusively at Susa. For many years it was recognized that a sizable number of objects from excavations there were made of what appeared to be bitumen. Variously described as "black stone," "bituminous limestone," or simply "bitumen," these objects were in fact made of bitumen mastic, an artificial substance with a bitumen base (containing recrystallized calcite, pyrite, clays, gypsum, and dolomite) that was fired at a low temperature (250°C) and then carved as though it were stone. Objects made of bitumen mastic span the fourth through first millennia BCE and include a wide variety of containers (bowls, canisters, etc.), beads, seals (stamp and cylinder), sculpture (human and animal), weights, spindle whorls, dice, and objects of unknown function. Geochemical analyses have shown that, in spite of a ready supply of stone in the Zagros Mountains to the north and east of Susa, the ancient inhabitants of the site exploited bitumen seeps in southern Luristan for the raw material used to make bitumen mastic. Interestingly, some of the carved vessels include imitations of elaborately decorated bowls and jars made of soft stone (chlorite, steatite), original examples of which have been found in small numbers at Susa and are known to have been manufactured in eastern Iran (e.g., at Tepe Yahya in Kerman province).

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The mounting of horns on temples, or indeed on secular buildings, as a sign of strength and authority is documented in many cultures around the world. Numerous references suggest that horns adorned temples at both Susa and Anshan. In a notorious statement describing the sack of Susa, Assurbanipal says that he destroyed the ziggurat there and broke off its horns of gleaming bronze. A text of the Middle Elamite ruler Shilhak-Inshushinak mentions the casting of gilded bronze (or bronze and gold?) horns, while the manufacture of horns is alluded to in roughly contemporary texts from Tal-e Malyan. Two stone horns discovered at Susa bear inscriptions identifying them as alabaster horns for the temple of the goddess Pinikir. Clearly, horns were a well-established feature of Elamite religious architecture. They form part of a tradition extending well back into Neolithic times, when cattle horns were mounted in the walls of some of the shrines at Çatal Höyük in Anatolia.

In antiquity, different peoples in the Near East were often distinguished by particular types of weaponry and dress, and the Elamites seem to have been no exception to this general pattern. Certain types of chariots, for example, seem to have been particularly significant. During the early excavations at Susa in the area known as the Donjon, at least one third-millennium burial was discovered containing a four-wheeled chariot. A fragmentary composite bronze from a *sukkalmah*-period sarcophagus grave shows a deity seated on a chariot, and this is particularly interesting in light of the Haft Tepe stele that refers to a festival honoring the "chariot of the god," as well as references to a chariot with gold fittings and various chariot parts in the economic texts from the site. The Neo-Assyrian reliefs depict Elamites using chariots and wagons for troop transport with either twelve (647 BCE, in Assurbanipal's campaign against Humban-haltash) or sixteen spokes (653 BCE, in Assurbanipal's campaign against Te-Umman), numbers that are higher than those attested in other ancient forms of chariotry. Such a large number of spokes must have made Elamite vehicles appear distinctive to Babylonian and Assyrian observers.

The Elamites are also noted for having distinctive types of portable weaponry. During the *sukkalmah* period, a flanged axhead with a flaring blade was in use. Because of the fact that an example of this type bears the name of Atta-hushu, a *sukkal* of Susa, it has come to be known as the "Atta-hushu type" axe. An Assyrian text from 784 BCE shows that a type of bow known as "Elamite" was both manufactured and used in Assyria at that time. In the late eighth century BCE, Elamite bowmen fought against Sargon II and alongside his Chaldean adversary, Merodach-Baladan II. Describing the defection of the Elamite pretender Ummanigash and his family to Assyria during one of the frequent power struggles among Elamite royalty that characterized the seventh century BCE, Assurbanipal says that they were accompanied by "countless bowmen." Some scholars have suggested that the distinctive bows with duck head finials depicted on the Apadana stairway reliefs at Persepolis and on the glazed brick reliefs at Susa represent the Elamite bow, and that the type was adopted by Persian archers, who also used "Susian quivers." The Elamite bow symbolizes Elamite political and military might in a prophecy in the Bible[2] (Jeremiah 49:35), where we read, "Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might." This

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has often been interpreted as an indication of a loss of Elamite independence at Babylonian hands during the reign of Zedekiah of Judah (597–586 BCE), but the evidence of any real Babylonian political control over Elam in the post-Assyrian period is ambiguous at best.

Finally, Achaemenid reliefs at Persepolis depict Persian noblemen wearing a distinctive type of dagger with a crescentic hilt and a scabbard with an elongated upper extension, straight on top and scalloped along the bottom. Darius himself wears this type of dagger on the Egyptian statue of him found at Susa. As Elamite warriors depicted on Assyrian reliefs are also shown with this type of dagger at their waists, many scholars feel confident in identifying it as an Elamite dagger.

Other characteristically Elamite material culture is known only from written sources. At Haft Tepe, for example, we find an account of a disbursement of linen. A perishable textile like linen has little chance of preservation in the humid environment of Khuzistan, yet it seems that the tradition of flax cultivation and linen manufacture was an ancient one, for a pre-Sargonic text from Girsu (Tello) refers to the cultivation of "Susian flax" in the area of Lagash during the mid-third millennium BCE.

Finally, we have iconographic information on Elamite music from several sources. A number of male terracotta figurines from Susa found in early second-millennium, *sukkalmah*-period contexts depict lutenists. In each case, the lute shown has a small, rounded sound box and a narrow, elongated fretboard. The Neo-Elamite rock reliefs at Kul-e Farah, on the other hand, show musicians holding four-stringed vertical harps, nine-stringed horizontal harps, and a rectangular drum or tambourine. Altogether three groups of musicians are depicted in the reliefs at Kul-e Farah, consisting of three vertical harpists (Kul-e Farah III); four vertical and two horizontal harpists, plus a "leader" or "conductor" (Kul-e Farah IV); and one vertical harpist, one horizontal harpist, and a drummer/tambourine player (Kul-e Farah I). The presence of these groups in the Kul-e Farah reliefs suggests they depict music being played by an ensemble rather than individual musicians. Comparisons with harpists on Assyrian reliefs reveal distinct differences in both the instruments and the manner in which they were played, and it is highly probable that Elamite music was as distinctive as other aspects of Elamite culture.

Literary History

We cannot properly speak of a history of Elamite literature in the sense that we can of Mesopotamian, Sasanian, or Islamic literature. Economic texts written in a protocuneiform script appeared at Susa and a small number of other sites on the Iranian Plateau (Tal-e Ghazir, Tal-e Malyan, Sialk, Tepe Yahya, Shahr-e Sokhta, Tepe Özbeki, Tepe Hissar) in the late fourth millennium, and while many have been termed "Proto-Elamite," there is no proof that these earliest written documents on Iranian territory were related to later manifestations of written Elamite, such as the Linear Elamite inscriptions, all of which date to the reign of Puzur-Inshushinak (ca. 2100 BCE). Similarly, although Akkadian was used at Susa for economic, royal, legal,

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and religious texts, it did not, apparently, contribute to the production of a native Elamite literature to the degree that one finds in Anatolia, for example.

There was, however, a scholarly tradition at Susa that formed part of a much wider tradition of the production and reproduction of generically Mesopotamian literary works in scribal schools. Thus, for example, a tablet containing part of the legend of Etana, a well-known literary work concerned with a mythical figure who ruled after the Flood, according to the *Sumerian King List*, was found in an early second-millennium context at Susa. Fragments of the Sumerian dispute poem "Datepalm and Tamarisk" and of the mythological text "How Grain Came to Sumer" have also been found at Susa. Quite probably, texts like these came from a temple library. That such libraries existed in Elam—almost certainly at Susa—is proved by a text of Seleucid date from Uruk that is now in the Louvre (AO 6451).[3] The text was written by a priest from Uruk who copied, among other things, an Akkadian ritual text dating to the reign of Nabopolassar (625–605 BCE) and inscribed his copy with a colophon that read, "Kidinanu, a citizen of Uruk, a *mashmashu*-priest of Anu and Antu...looked at these tablets in the land of Elam, copied them in the reign of the kings Seleucus and Antiochus, and brought [his copies] back to the city of Uruk."

Apart from these few indications, little evidence of Elamite literary activity has survived. Nevertheless, a fragmentary Akkadian text containing the first part of tablet 22 of the Mesopotamian astrological omen series *Enuma Anu Enlil* is extremely important, as it contains local material that differs from the standard Mesopotamian version. An Elamite hemerology, or more properly menology, listing auspicious days was excerpted from the series *Iqqur ipus*, with some paragraphs containing information on lunar eclipses in the first and second watch of each night. An unusual compendium of dream omens is known from Susa that is written using the Elamite script and the Akkadian language. Although there are not many such texts, their very existence at Susa, the presence of locally generated content in the fragment of *Enuma Anu Enlil*, and the use of Elamite as well as Akkadian suggest the presence at Susa in the Middle Elamite period of "scholar-scribes" or high religious officials with political influence (wielded via divination and the interpretation of omens), so-called chief scholar-experts, of the sort known in Assyria and Babylonia. This seems to have been confirmed, moreover, by the discovery at Susa in 1962 of a small library consisting of twelve large tablets. Most of these were compendia of omens derived from an inspection of the liver of an animal by a diviner (hepatoscopy), while several were omens derived from the inspection of both human and animal fetuses and newborns (teratoscopy). Two other texts in this library were Sumerian-Akkadian bilinguals, one a copy of two letters by Shulgi, the Ur III monarch, the other a magico-religious piece. Of these texts one (the Shulgi letter) carried the name "Enlil-tajjar, young scribe" in the colophon, while four had the name of a scribe named Shurri-Shamash (in one case written Shurri-Shamash-u-Adad) with, in two cases, the name of an additional scribe, Ilima-ilu.

To what extent the intellectual tradition reflected in these texts was present outside of a metropolitan center such as Susa is difficult to judge, particularly as the evidence of Elamite's use is limited to such a small number of sites (Susa, Tal-e

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Malyan, Haft Tepe, Chogha Zanbil, and Kul-e Farah, to name the most important ones). Given the very long period during which Mesopotamian religious beliefs and scribal/scholarly traditions penetrated southwestern Iran, however, it would be surprising if Susa were the only site to reveal aspects of the Mesopotamian-inspired literary and scholarly tradition. In time, we should expect that excavations at other major settlements, like Deh-e Now, will reveal much more about the intellectual, social, cultural, and political history of ancient Elam.

NOTES

1. P. Steinkeller, "On the Identity of the Toponym LÚ.SU(.A)," *JAOS* 108 (1988): 197–202.
2. Jeremiah 49:35.
3. Cited in D. T. Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam: Formation and Transformation of an Ancient Iranian State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 289.

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CHAPTER 3

AVESTAN SOCIETY

PRODS OKTOR SKJÆRVØ

THE *Avesta* is a collection of texts in an Iranian language (Avestan), spoken some time in the second to first millennium BCE. Their geographical horizon is the area between the Aral Sea (Chorasmia), the Helmand river plain in southern Afghanistan, and Gurgan, southeast of the Caspian Sea, as well as possibly also Ragā (Rhagae), to the east of modern Ray, south of Tehran (in ancient Media).

The texts are ritual and didactic. There are no "real-life" narratives and no references either to contemporary history or to the texts' own histories, so we do not know in what historical contexts the texts were composed. As these are the only direct sources for the history of the "Avestan people," information about the cultural aspects of the peoples among whom the texts were composed is mainly limited to mostly brief mythical narratives and matters of custom and law. Information about other aspects of material culture is mostly marginal to the above concerns, but also has to be understood in its context. Much of it is found in stereotypical formulas (for instance, the social divisions) and inherited expressions, which may have applied to stages of the Iranian society older than that in which the extant texts were composed.

The language itself, however, gives us some further clues. Avestan is closely related to Rigvedic (as, generally, ancient Iranian is to ancient Indic or Indo-Aryan), which tells us that it was probably spoken in the second millennium BCE, and in view of the geographical names in the *Avesta*, it is tempting to try to correlate second- to first-millennium Central Asian archeological remains with the ancient Iranians. Determining the archeological identity of the early Iranians, however, is another problem. Several scenarios have been proposed, but in the 1990s, the so-called Bactrian Margiana Archeological Complex (BMAC) in Bronze Age Central Asia was proposed as belonging to the Iranians. The archeological picture of Central Asia and the Iranian Plateau is quite sketchy, however, since most of the exploration has taken place in the area of the Central Asian republics of Turkmenistan and

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Uzbekistan, and there are still large unexplored areas that contain potentially crucial evidence—notably most of Khurasan, but also the area to the north of the Central Asian republics. The archeological picture of the BMAC, notably its spread throughout the Iranian Plateau, is therefore not yet known in all its details and is constantly changing.

The *Avesta* and the *Zand*

There are an older and a younger form of Avestan, comparable to Rigvedic and Achaemenid Old Persian, respectively. The text corpus therefore comprises the *Old Avesta* and the *Young(er) Avesta*. The very small *Old Avesta* contains the *Gāthā*s and the *Yasna Hapta-hāti*, while the *Young Avesta* contains the other Avestan texts (see below). According to the *Avesta*, many of these texts were spoken by Ahura Mazdā to Zarathustra, who communicated them to mankind.

The Avestan texts were written down only in Sasanian times, under King Khosrow (531–79 CE) according to the tradition, but possibly later. Thus, the gap between the first manuscripts and the time the texts reached their final form may range from 1,000 to 1,500 years (see below). This first written version of the *Avesta* is sometimes referred to as "the Sasanian *Avesta*." By that time, the Avestan texts themselves were no longer understood, but were accompanied by a Middle Persian (Pahlavi) version with commentaries, the *Zand*. According to book eight of the *Dēnkard*, a Pahlavi text from the ninth century that contains a summary of the *Avesta*, the *Avesta* was at that time divided into twenty-one parts (*nask*), only one of which survives in its entirety, the *Videvdad* (*nask* no. 19) The attribution of the remaining Avestan texts to the individual *nask*s remains uncertain to various degrees. For instance, the *Gāthā*s belong to the *Stōd yasn nask* (no. 21) and the *Hērbedestān* and *Nīrangestān* to the **Uspārom nask* (no. 17).

There are a few earlier references to the Pahlavi *Avesta*. In the third century CE, the high priest Kerdīr cited from a *nask* in his description of the fate of the soul after death (ca. 270 CE), and Manichean texts from the third and fourth centuries contain references to *nask*s and also the names of the five *Gāthā*s.

Only texts with *Zand* were described in the *Dēnkard*; those whose *Zand* had been lost are only mentioned, for instance, in the *Waštag* (no. 11). It is therefore not clear how much of the Avestan texts were lost between the *Dēnkard* and our earliest extant manuscripts, the oldest of which go back to the thirteenth or fourteenth century, although most of them are from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. According to colophons in some of the early manuscripts detailing their lineage, these go back to mother manuscripts written about 1000 CE. This means that we have no direct evidence for the Sasanian *Avesta* from the 400 years between the Sasanian archetype and the ancestor(s) of our manuscripts, and there is no evidence for the Avestan text at all before ca. 1000 CE.

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From this, it is obvious that the manuscript text we have cannot be exactly what was "composed" originally. In an oral tradition, even the notion of "composition" and the formation of text "collections" or "anthologies" such as those in the manuscripts of the *Avesta* (let alone "canons") are vague concepts. Field studies of oral traditions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have established a number of principles governing oral composition and transmission that must be kept in mind when extracting evidence from the *Avesta* for the history of Zoroastrianism and the culture of the Old Iranians among whom the Avestan texts originated.

The Oral *Avesta*

The Avestan texts were oral compositions, which in ancient, preliterate times typically involved casting traditional themes in new forms; "singing a new poem," as claimed by the Gathic and Rigvedic poets, did not usually involve new themes. The texts are therefore replete with traditional material inherited from the time of Indo-Iranian unity, which was somewhat modified over time by subtractions and additions as the populations moved and made new contacts.

Two different manners of composition must be assumed for the *Old* and *Young Avesta*. The Old Avestan poems are elaborate and, probably, time-consuming compositions using a variety of meters, while most of the Young Avestan texts, including didactic texts, are in a set meter of mostly eight syllables using formulaic material, which facilitated oral transmission. We must assume they were recomposed to varying degrees each time they were recited.

At some stage, a number of ritual and didactic texts were gathered into some kind of corpus, which must also have developed as it was transmitted from generation to generation and as the people who used it moved from place to place. Originally, this orally transmitted corpus must have been continuously updated linguistically as the spoken language developed. Twice during this transmission, however, it was decided by priests that the text was no longer to be changed, but was to be preserved in the linguistic form it had at that time. This produced what are called "crystallized" texts—that is, texts that were not to be altered when recited—and as a consequence, after a few generations the language of the texts no longer corresponded to the spoken language and was gradually less and less well understood. The Old Avestan texts were crystallized, perhaps, some time in the late second millennium BCE, while the Young Avestan texts, including the already crystallized *Old Avesta*, were themselves, perhaps, crystallized under the Achaemenids, when Zoroastrianism became the religion of the kings. This corpus of texts in dead languages was then transmitted by Zoroastrian priests from northeastern to southwestern Iran until it was written down.

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It is important to realize that there is no reason to think that the Avestan texts as we have them are in the exact same form as when they were composed and that all the grammatical errors, for instance, were made by the composers.

Since the Avestan languages were no longer understood, translations and commentaries in the current languages must have existed at the various times and in the various places the texts were used. Thus, the third-century CE references to *nask*s were not to the Avestan texts themselves but to their *Zand*, and it was this auxiliary oral tradition that was later referred to as *Dēn*, the "Tradition."

The Avestan Manuscripts

Of the manuscripts, some contain only the Avestan text (the *sade* "plain" manuscripts), others contain the Avestan texts and their Pahlavi *Zand*, and some add a Sanskrit translation of the Pahlavi, made in India by Neriosangh, son of Dhaval (perhaps fifteenth century).

Most of the extant manuscripts were obtained in India, although many had been written in Iran. Most of the manuscripts in India are in the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute library, Mumbai, but the Meherji Rana library in Navsari also has a good collection, and many are in smaller library collections or in private possession. Anquetil's manuscripts (see below) were deposited in the royal library in Paris, now the Bibliothèque Nationale. Many of the oldest and best manuscripts, however, were acquired in India and Iran by the Danish scholars Rasmus Rask and Niels L. Westergaard in the nineteenth century and are now in the Royal Library, Copenhagen. The British Library in London, the Bodleian in Oxford, and the Bavarian State Library also have good collections of manuscripts, and smaller collections are found in Iranian and other Western libraries.

The oldest of all our extant manuscripts is a *Vispered* manuscript (K7a) with *Zand* perhaps dated 1278. The two oldest *Yasna* (J2, K5) and two oldest *Videvdad* (K1, L4) manuscripts with *Zand* were written by the same scribe in 1323 and 1323 and 1324, respectively. The oldest *Khorde Avesta* manuscript (Jm4) is from 1352. The oldest *Yasht* manuscript is F1 (1591), from which almost all the *Yasht* manuscripts are descended; those not from F1 are much later, but some are from side lines that contain important corrections to the text of F1.

The Avestan Texts

The *Avesta*, contrary to the impression gained from Western editions, is not a single corpus of texts but a compilation of texts from various manuscripts. No manuscript contains the entire *Avesta*, and the order of the texts in Western editions does not

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correspond to any indigenous tradition. Chapter and section divisions in the editions correspond to divisions (*hāti*, *karda*) in the manuscripts, but smaller divisions are more arbitrary. There is currently no complete single edition of the Avestan texts, nor are there up-to-date editions or translations of all the texts.

Among the extant Avestan texts are the following:

> The *Yasna* (Y.0–72) is the text accompanying the *yasna* ritual (see below). It includes the Old Avestan texts, that is, the *Yasna Hapta-hāti* "the sacrifice in seven sections" (Y.35–41) and the five *Gāthās* "songs," named after their first words: 1. the *Ahunawatī gāthā* "the song of the new life to be" (Y.28–34); 2. the *Ushtawatī g.* "the song of the wishes" (Y.43–46); 3. the *Spantā-manyū g.* "the song of the life-giving spirit" (Y.47–50); 4. the *Vohu-khshathrā g.* "the song of the good command" (Y.51); and 5. the *Vahishta-ishtī g.* "the song of the best ritual (?)" (Y.53+54.1).

Other important texts in the *Yasna* are the praise of Haoma or *Hōm stawan* (Y.9–11); the *Frawarānē*, the Zoroastrian "profession of faith" (Y.12); and the hymn to Sraosha, or *Srōsh-yasht* (Y.57).

When the *Yasna* is recited in the *vispered* or *videvdad sade* rituals, some parts of the text are replaced by texts collected in separate manuscripts and referred to as the *Vispered* (Vr.).

The *yasht*s are hymns to individual deities, arranged in a sequence that by and large corresponds to the names of the days of the month in the Zoroastrian calendar (see below):

> *Yasht* 1 to Ahura Mazdā (1st day)
> *Yasht* 2 to the seven Amesha Spantas (2nd day, Vohu Manah)
> *Yasht* 3 to Asha Vahishta (3rd day)
> *Yasht* 4 to Harwatāt (6th day)
> *Yasht* 5 to Ardwī Sūrā Anāhitā (10th day)
> *Yasht* 6 to the sun (11th day)
> *Yasht* 7 to the moon (12th day)
> *Yasht* 8 to Tishtriya, the star Sirius (13th day)
> *Yasht* 9 to Druwāspā (Pahlavi Gōsh: 14th day)
> *Yasht* 10 to Mithra (16th day)
> *Yasht* 11 to Sraosha (17th day)
> *Yasht* 12 to Rashnu (18th day)
> *Yasht* 13 to the *Frawashi*s (19th day)
> *Yasht* 14 to Verthragna (20th day)
> *Yasht* 15 to Vāyu (21st day)
> *Yasht* 16 to Chistā (24th day)
> *Yasht* 17 to Ashi (25th day)
> *Yasht* 18 to Arshtāt, Rectitude (26th day)
> *Yasht* 19 *Zamyād yasht* to the earth (28th day)
> *Yasht* 20 to Haoma
> *Yasht* 21 to the star Vanant (30th day, endless Lights)

The *Khorde Avesta* is a miscellany of hymns and other ritual texts for official and private liturgical use, among them several of the *yasht*s; the *Niyāyishn*s (Ny.),

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"invocations" to the sun, Mithra, the moon, Ardwī Sūrā Anāhitā (the waters), and Ātash ī Bahrām (the fire); the *Gāhs*, prayers spoken at the different times of the day and night; the two *Sī-rōzas* (S.), invocations of the deities of the thirty days of the months; and the *Āfrīnagān* (Āfr.), various invocations. There are Pahlavi and Sanskrit as well as modern Persian and Gujarati translations.

The *Videvdad* (also *Vendidad*, *Wi-dēw-dād*, etc.), literally "the law(s) or regulations (*dād*) (serving to keep) the evil gods (*dēw*) away (*vi-*)," is a collection of texts concerned mainly with purification rituals, but framed by myths: chapter 1, how Ahura Mazdā created the various provinces of Iran and the Dark Spirit made a scourge for each province; chapter 2, how Yima, the first king, built an enclosure to house all living things during a winter and flood that decimated the population of the earth; chapter 19, Zarathustra's exorcism of the Dark Spirit; and chapters 20–21, the healing of the world.

Among other texts are the *Hādōkht nask* (chapter 2 about the fate of the soul after death); the *Aogmadaēca* (concerning death); and the *Hērbedestān* (*Ēhrbedestān*) and *Nīrangestān* ("handbooks" on the education of priests and on rituals). Some Avestan texts may be relatively modern compositions based on the oral tradition, such as the *Āfrīn ī payghambar Zardusht* "the blessing of the prophet Zarathustra" and the *Wishtāsp yasht*. The *Wizīrkerd ī dēnīg* "decisions from the Tradition" is known only from a nineteenth-century printed edition.

Numerous fragments from extant and lost Avestan texts are quoted in the Pahlavi translation of the Avestan texts and in other Pahlavi texts, among them the *Pursishnīhā* (a collection of questions and answers in Pahlavi regarding religious matters citing Avestan passages) and an Avestan-Pahlavi glossary, the *Frahang ī oīm*. About one-fourth of these fragments are from the extant texts, which *may* mean that about three-fourths of the original collection is lost. Other lost Avestan fragments are known only from their Pahlavi versions scattered throughout the Pahlavi literature.

There is no complete edition or translation of the Avestan corpus. Westergaard's edition has more texts, but is based on fewer manuscripts than that of Geldner. Darmesteter's translation is almost complete, but in large part outdated. See the bibliography for recent editions and translations, and consult the article "Avesta" in the *Encyclopædia Iranica* for additional references to date.

Worldview

Most of the information about the world found in the *Avesta* is presented from the perspective of myth (i.e., stories involving interaction between the human and divine worlds). The main obstacle to understanding the myths is the absence, with a few exceptions, of extended narratives in the *Avesta* itself. After all, the divine and human audiences to whom the texts were recited were supposed to know the stories

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and be able to recognize them even from the briefest and most cryptic of allusions (especially in the *Old Avesta*). The much later Pahlavi versions of the stories are also incomplete or do not necessarily reflect the Avestan myths faithfully, and are therefore of limited assistance. The same is even truer of the Persian versions, as in the case of the stories of Yima's (Jamshid) fall from grace[1] and Kawi Haosrawa's revenge for Siyāwarshan.[2]

The principal myths are those about the beginning and end of the world (cosmology, eschatology); about the world as the battleground between the forces of good and evil, including myths involving gods, heroes, and, especially, Zarathustra; and about what happens after death.

In these myths, the notion of "thought" (*man-*) plays a pervasive role. It must be kept in mind that in an oral society, thought and memory played the same role as modern books and media and were therefore crucial for the poets' and priests' activities. The most frequent derivative of *man-* is *manah* ("thought" or "mind"), and especially *vohu manah* ("good thought"). In the *Old Avesta*, one of the functions of thought is to serve as a receptacle of inspiration (*manyu*). Thus, once he has obtained the inspiration, the poet will question or converse with his good thought to find the knowledge contained in it about how to compose his poems and perform his ritual,[3] while his incompetent rivals do not do so.[4] During this questioning and consultation, by virtue of his "readiness to listen" (*sraosha*), which opens a path (*gātu*) of communication between the divine and human worlds, the poet will understand what Ahura Mazdā tells him.[5] Most importantly, the Old Avestan creation myth is patterned on the poet's creative activity.

The Cosmogonic Myth

The most important texts containing fragments of the cosmogonic myth are the *Old Avesta* (Y.48.6) and the *Frawardīn yasht*, the hymn to the *frawashi*s (*Yasht* 13), which contains references to Ahura Mazdā's primordial ordering of the cosmos and its birth, the attack and defeat of the Evil One, and the setting in motion of the world.

The principal event in this myth is the cycle of order and chaos, according to which the world cycles through two forms of existence (*ahu*) represented by day and night and by summer and winter. The ordered cosmos is literally reborn as the new existence every new day at sunrise and every new year at the spring equinox,[6] but relapses into chaos, the bad existence, every evening and every winter. The ordered cosmos, characterized by light, health, fertility, and life, is arranged according to the principles of cosmic Order (*asha*), while the principle of chaos, characterized by darkness, illness, and death, is referred to as the cosmic "deception" (*druj*).

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The rulers of the two worlds are Ahura Mazdā, the all-knowing (ruling) lord, who set everything in its place (*dā-*), thus producing Order, and the Dark (Evil) Spirit, who brought evil things into Ahura Mazdā's ordered world.

In the *Old Avesta*, the origins of the two opposing forces were two primordial "spirits" (*manyu*), the Life-giving Spirit (*spanta manyu*) and the Dark (*angra*) Spirit, described as "twin sleeps," that is, presumably, two sleeping fetuses waiting to be born.[7] These two spirits conversed, presumably while still in the womb, detailing their opposite and irreconcilable natures to each other.[8]

In the *Young Avesta*, the two spirits are said to have set in place (*dā-*) their artistic/good and artless/bad creations (*dāman*, respectively).[9] In particular, in chapter 1 of the *Videvdad*, for each land established by Ahura Mazdā, the Dark Spirit "whittled forth" (*fra-kert-*) his counter creations: enemies, illness, and natural plagues, presumably in a much less expert fashion than Ahura Mazdā.

Certain entities explicitly antedated the first creation, as suggested by their Avestan epithet "established by themselves" or "following their own law" (*khwadāta*, exact meaning uncertain), namely the lights "without beginning" (*an-agrā raocāh*) and the "intermediate (?) place" (*miswāna gātu*). The Firmament (*thwāsha*) and Vāyu, the space inside heaven surrounding the earth, are said to "long follow their own law" (*dargō-khwadāta*), which presumably refers to the fact that they exercise their specific functions only for the duration of the world. Precreation Time (*zruwan*) is said to be "unbounded" (*a-karana*) or "uncut" (*a-thwarshta*), whereas the Time of the creation "long follows its own law."[10]

The world was established in several periods, four according to the later Pahlavi narrative. Taking this as our frame, we can reconstruct the Avestan myth along the following lines.

At the beginning of the first period, Ahura Mazdā "cut" (*thwars-*) from unbounded Time (*zruwan*) a specific duration (*thwarshta āyu*) or Time "that long follows its own law." Similarly, from the lights without beginning, he fashioned the "lights established for the duration of the temporal (?) existence" (*stidāta*).[11] He then established the "world of thought,"[12] which is beyond ordinary human perception and contains divine beings and their dwellings, the sky, and the heavenly waters. Among divine beings are the "Life-giving Immortals" (*amesha spantas*) and various deities. Ahura Mazdā's "house"[13] is the "house of song" (*garō-dmāna*, *garō-nmāna*), which is located in the highest heaven. The other gods have houses on the tops of mountains; for instance, Sraosha's is on Haratī,[14] Mithra's on Harā.[15]

In the second period, the "world of living beings" (*gaēthiya*) was conceived in embryonic form. Ahura Mazdā's principal assistants were the *frawashis* (see below), who helped him spread out and hold up the macrocosmic "tissues" of the sky, the heavenly river, and the earth.[16]

The creative activities of Ahura Mazdā involved producing by his thought (*man-*), fashioning as a carpenter (*tash-*, *thwars-*), making (*kar-*), setting in place (*dā-*), upholding and maintaining (*dar-*), and giving birth (*zan-*). There is no sug-

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gestion in the *Avesta* of a creation ex nihilo. The cosmic Order itself was born from Ahura Mazdā's thought,[17] and the ordering was achieved by a primordial *yasna* ritual.[18] The various entities of Ahura Mazdā's world of thought (including time and the gods) in turn became the prototypes or models (*ratu*) for all things in the world of living beings, which they also protect.

The third period saw the birth of the world of living beings (*gaēthā*), provided with life breath (*ushtāna*) and bones (*ast*), hence called the "existence with bones" (*ahu astwant*).

This event is connected with the Dark Spirit's attempt to enter Ahura Mazdā's creation and prevent the world from being born. He managed to get across the border,[19] but his purpose was thwarted by the *frawashi*s, who, together with Good Thought and the Fire, intercepted him, and, by their actions, confined him inside the (spherical) sky, which kept him from leaving Ahura Mazdā's creation, thereby presumably limiting his activities. As a result, the world of living beings came into motion: the sun, moon, and stars turned; water flowed and plants grew; and living beings multiplied.[20]

The Gods

The Old Avestan texts mention few divine beings by names: Ahura Mazdā, the Life-giving Immortals, Aryaman, Sraosha, Ashi; Haoma possibly encrypted by the epithet *duraosha*; and perhaps also, encrypted, Mithra and Rashnu. By contrast, the pantheon of the *Young Avesta* and the later texts is quite crowded with deities, "a hundred and a thousand" according to Yt.6.1. Some of the gods were Ahura Mazdā's offspring, others he "established" (*dā-*) or "set forth" (*fra-dā-*) (in the sky as stars and constellations?).

Typical of divine beings is their possession of "life-giving" power. This active quality is expressed by a family of words whose basic meaning is "swell," that is, with the juices of fertility and life. The most common of these words is *spanta* "life-giving, endowed with life-giving power," which is often translated by the quite misleading Judeo-Christian term "holy."

Beings in the world of thought are "life-giving" and "immortal," epithets applied to "best Order" and "all the good male and female ones dwelling with good thought" in the *Yasna hapta-hāti*.[21] In the *Young Avesta*, the terms also refer specifically to the seven "Life-giving Immortals."

Ahura Mazdā

Ahura means literally "(ruling) lord," Mazdā(h) "he who puts (things) in his mind," and the name approximately "the all-knowing lord." In the *Gāthā*s, with

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their complex meters, the two epithets are frequently separated, while in the *Yasna hapta-hāti* they are together, but in varying order. In the *Young Avesta*, Ahura Mazdā is simply the name of the divinity, and it is unlikely that there still was a feeling for what the words originally meant. By the Achaemenid period, the univerbation process was complete, and the name appeared as Ahuramazdā (still later Ohrmazd, Hormezd).

Ahura Mazdā was the father of the six Life-giving Immortals and of the heavenly Fire, the sun.

The Life-Giving Immortals

Six of the elements of Ahura Mazdā's primordial sacrifice (*amesha spanta*s) became gods in their own right. In the *Old Avesta*, their names still retain their original meanings, while in the *Young Avesta* they have become a fixed series of seven, including Ahura Mazdā, their father.

Their mythical-ritual functions can be summed up as follows. By his Good Thought, Ahura Mazdā performed a successful sacrifice, establishing the Best Order, whereby he also obtained the Well-deserved Command, making him the ruler of the world. He was then able to protect Life-giving Humility, the earth, his daughter and wife, who produced all good things for living beings. As reward for the sacrifice, Wholeness, the waters, made Amertatāt, the plants, grow.

Good Thought (vohu manah)

In the Old Avestan creation myth, Good Thought also appears to represent the covering of the day sky, which is stretched out by the poet-sacrificers.[22] In the *Young Avesta*, Good Thought is also used to refer to a living being.[23]

Best Order (asha vahishta)

Thought (forth) and engendered by Ahura Mazdā,[24] this is the cosmic Order that Ahura Mazdā imposed on the universe by his primordial sacrifice in the other world and is constantly renewed by him with the help of sacrifices in this world. The cosmic Order is manifested in the heavenly spaces illuminated by the sun, as reflected in the term *asha-khwāthra* "reaching up into the free spaces of Order" applied to mountains.[25] In the *Old Avesta*, Order is said to contain the sun.[26] The exact meaning of *asha* is probably "(harmoniously) fitted together."

One of the most sacred prayers in Zoroastrianism is the *Ashem Vohū*, which says that the sacrificer's (and every human's) duty is to support Ahura Mazdā's cosmic Order. When the order of the sacrifice (and the correct behavior of humans) regenerates Ahura Mazdā's Order, this will be their best reward:

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> Order is the best good (reward/possession) there is.
> There are wished-for things in the wish for this one
> when one's Order is for the best Order.

The Well-Deserved Command (khshathra variya)

The "command" is, more precisely, the power of command possessed by a general who leads his forces against an adversary. The term *variya* is used about well-deserved rewards, specifically for a successful sacrifice.[27] It was by the command generated by his original sacrifice that Ahura Mazdā first defeated Evil, and the sacrificer, having obtained the command by his sacrifice, is able to overcome his competitors and transfers the command to Ahura Mazdā, who thereby again overcomes death and darkness and produces life and light and fertility for the earth/Ārmati and a good reward for his followers.[28] The bad poet-sacrificers use their twisted and evil command to make the evil state return and to maintain lack of peace and prosperity. In the *Young Avesta*, Well-deserved Command can also be used to refer to metal implements.

Life-Giving Humility (spantā ārmati)

Ārmati, Humility, is the daughter of Ahura Mazdā. Already in the Old Avestan texts, she is clearly the deity of the Earth, as she is in the later Avestan texts. Her "humility" refers to the earth's "humble" role as the daughter and spouse of Ahura Mazdā, as well as to her bearing patiently all that happens upon her. The ritual action of "homage" (*namah*), that is, bending down to the earth, is regularly associated with Ārmati. In the *Young Avesta*, she is explicitly the mother of Ashi and implicitly of Ashi's siblings Sraosha, Rashnu, Mithra, and the Daēnā Māzdayasni.[29] The actual meaning of the word may be "thinking in right measure," which is contrasted with "thinking beyond the right measure, scorning." Traditional translations such as "right-mindedness" make little immediate sense. The translation "humility" is meant to evoke Latin *humilis*, from *humus* "earth."

Wholeness and Non-dyingness (harwatāt and amertatāt)

Wholeness and non-dyingness refer to the fact of not having defects and blemishes and not dying before one's time. They represent the desired state of the world and are generated by the sacrifice. In both the *Old* and *Young Avesta*, the names can be used to refer to water and plants.

The *Daēnā* and the Daēnā Māzdayasni

In the *Old Avesta*, the *daēnā* is a part of the mental constitution of humans that allows them to *see* in the world of thought (see below). In the ritual race (see below), she serves as the guide of the chariot carrying the sacrifice, including the

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breath-soul (*urwan*) of the singer, up to the gods, fighting evil on its way. The *daēnās* of the sacrificers are therefore said to be "those who are winning, shall now win, and have always won."[30] The *daēnās* are launched into the race by Life-giving Humility, the earth.[31]

In the *Young Avesta*, the Daēnā Māzdayasni, "the *daēnā* of those who sacrifice to Ahura Mazdā," is a martial deity, Ahura Mazdā's daughter and the sister of Ashi, Rashnu, and Mithra.[32] She lays out (*rād-*) the paths for Mithra[33] and, after the battle, unties her harness and lays down her weapons.[34] In this function, she is also connected with the myth of Kawi Vishtāspa, who apparently rescued her during one of her missions as she was caught in the tangled net of the forces of evil, and instead placed her on high.[35] This detail may be connected with the statement that she is the sacred star-adorned girdle (see below) of Haoma that he wears on the highest mountains, which probably implies she, too, was represented in the sky as a constellation.[36]

Aryaman

Aryaman is the god of harmonious unions, who is invoked for peace and healing, and perhaps also for weddings. The *Old Avesta* concludes with a request for him to come,[37] and in the last chapter of the *Videvdad*,[38] he heals the ailing Ahura Mazdā and his creation.

Sraosha

Originally the readiness of the worshipper and the god to listen to one another, in the *Old Avesta* Sraosha maintains the channel of communication between the two worlds,[39] but his most important function is to fight evil during its periods of ascendancy, especially during the night, when, according to the *Young Avesta*, Sraosha "with the fearless mace" battles with Wrath "with the bloody mace" (the color of the sunset), the embodiment of the night sky, and toward morning inflicts on him a "bloody wound."[40] Sraosha is the god in charge of rewards,[41] which also seems to be the meaning of his Young Avestan epithet *Ashiya*.

Ashi, Goddess of the Rewards

Ashi's function according to her name (from *ar-ti*) is ambiguous: "reward" or "impulse." On the one hand, she distributes rewards, or perhaps "sends" (*er-nao-*) them on their way;[42] on the other hand, she drives a chariot and acts as charioteer of the gods, notably Mithra.[43] She is the daughter of Ahura Mazdā and Spantā Ārmati and the sister of Sraosha, Rashnu, and Mithra, as well as of the Daēnā Māzdayasni. In the *Young Avesta*, she is also featured in the Zarathustra myth (see below) and protects the home, family, and procreation.[44] She is commonly called "good Ashi" (*Ashish wahwī*).

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Haoma

The *haoma* was a plant whose juice was extracted and used in the sacrifice to prepare an intoxicating (*mad-*) drink that was thought to induce strength and longevity (compare the Old Indic *soma*). It also assured the sacrificer of good offspring. Thus Yima, Thraētaona, Kersāspa, and Zarathustra were born to the first four pressers of the *haoma*, Viwahwant, Āthwiya, Thrita of the Sāmas, and Porushāspa, in return for their sacrifices.[45] In the Pahlavi texts, Zarathustra's birth is said to result from his parents drinking *hōm*, and it is likely that Zarathustra is thought to be reborn in the *persona* of the sacrificer in every *yasna* ritual. The word *haoma* is not (explicitly) used in the *Old Avesta*, but its epithet *duraosha* (meaning unknown, but in the Pahlavi tradition said to mean "keeping death away") is found in a passage in which wrong and evil use of it is disparaged.[46]

Although attempts have been made to identify the original Indo-Iranian plant, we are obviously dealing with a mythical plant described by two different peoples (Iranians and Indo-Aryans) living in two different places and probably changing habitats throughout the period during which the poems were composed. The identity of the plant may in fact have changed throughout the prehistoric period, as it has in historical times. For as long as we have evidence, it has been the ephedra plant. The *haoma* is deified as Haoma, the god, who also plays a part in the mythical history (see below).

Fire (ātar)

The heavenly Fire is Ahura Mazdā's son and belongs to him. The sacrificial fire represents the heavenly fire and is also the messenger who goes between the worlds of thought and of living beings, bringing the offerings of the worshiper to the gods and the gifts of the gods to the worshipper. The fire takes various epithets, some of which may denote special types of fires, while others are merely descriptive.[47] In the *Old Avesta*, the fire is called *wrāzishta* "which invigorates (?) the most" and *spanishta* "most life-giving."[48] In the *Young Avesta*, the fire *berzisawah* is the fire providing life-giving strength in the height (the sun), while the fire *vāzishta* "most invigorating (?)" is probably the fire in the clouds, where it smites the demon Spanjagriya.[49] The epithet *vohu-friyāna* probably refers to the fire as a good guest friend (*friya*).[50] The fire is also associated with certain mountains and the *khwarnah*,[51] and it plays a mythical role in *Yasht* 19, where the Life-giving and Dark Spirits send their messengers to grab the *khwarnah*, among them the Fire and the Giant Dragon.[52]

Fires, together with humans, beasts, dogs, and birds, were already part of the original population of Aryana Vaējah when Yima ruled.[53]

The national fires and the "victorious" (*ātash wahrām*) fire of the Sasanian period are not mentioned in the *Avesta*, although the list in Ny.5.5–6 was inter-

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preted in the later tradition as representing three of them (Farnbag, Gushnasp, Burzēn-mihr).

During the ritual, the fire lies on a prescribed bed (*dātiyō-sayana*) and is fed prescribed firewood and incense as well as milk (*gawa*) and meat (*pitu*) by adult professionals (*dahma*).[54]

Other Young Avestan Gods

In the *Young Avesta*, beings in the worlds of thought and living beings who help Ahura Mazdā reestablish and maintain the cosmic Order are referred to as "deserving of sacrifices," *yazata*,[55] some of them even "as deserving of sacrifice as himself."[56] This word became the regular term for "god," but has no female form and (at least in the singular) only refers to male deities. The hymns to these gods typically tell how they were originally not worshipped by humans by their own names and how Ahura Mazdā then initiated their sacrifices by performing one himself.

The principal deities in the Young Avestan pantheon other than those mentioned above are the following.

Ardwī Sūrā Anāhitā

This is a female deity identified with the heavenly water (river), that is, probably the Milky Way. Her name likely originally meant "the lofty, life-giving, unattached one" (or "unblemished," as commonly rendered), where the third term refers to the fact that she does not need support to remain up above on the star level, whence she came down when Ahura Mazdā asked her to.[57] From the mythical Mount Hukarya "of good deeds," her enormous waters flow into the Voru-kasha Sea.[58] As a fertility goddess, she purifies the semen of the males and the wombs of the females so that they can conceive.[59] She is described as a richly dressed woman wearing beaver furs.[60]

Mithra

Mithra oversees the agreements and treaties regulating the social and political relationships between groups of humans. He is the friend of the truthful and the sworn enemy of the untruthful who break the agreement. The sanctity of the contract even transcends the good-bad duality: a contract is to be respected whether concluded with a sustainer of Order or someone possessed by the Lie.[61] To perform the function of overseer, Mithra never sleeps, has an inordinately large number of eyes and ears, and is able to survey vast areas.

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Mithra precedes the Sun at dawn, removing obstacles along its course, including the evil gods (*daēwa*s) and others possessed by the Lie, notably the Dark Spirit, Wrath, and Būshyanstā, the female demon of procrastination, who all fear him.[62] When the sun rises, Mithra precedes it over Mount Harā, surveying the Aryan lands and the seven continents.[63] The Greeks identified him with the planet Venus, which may well be correct. Later he also became identified with the sun itself.

Tishtriya

Tishtriya is the star Sirius, the Dog Star, which brings drought, personified as the *daēwa* Apaosha. According to his hymn,[64] Tishtriya takes on various forms at various times. When people sacrifice to him, for ten nights he flies through the lights in the form of a fifteen-year-old youth, the next ten nights in the form of a bull with golden hooves, and finally in the form of a white horse who comes down to the Voru-kasha Sea to drink. At that time, Apaosha comes against him in the form of a black horse, who for the first three nights is victorious and chases Tishtriya away from the sea. Having received a strengthening sacrifice from Ahura Mazdā himself, Tishtriya is victorious, and now the star Satawaēsa gathers rain clouds on the top of a mountain that stands in the middle of the Voru-kasha Sea. Then Haoma and the Impetuous Wind scatter them, bringing rain to the seven continents, which is distributed to the settlements by the Scion of the Waters, the Fortune placed in the water, and the *frawashis*.[65]

Tishtriya also fights the witches who fall from heaven (shooting stars) and the Witch of Bad Seasons.[66]

Vāyu (Vayu)

This is the god of the intermediate space between the earth and the spherical surrounding sky through which the breath-soul (*urwan*) and vision-soul (*daēnā*) of the dead must travel to get to the Bridge of the Accountant (see below). Depending on whether they go to heaven or hell, they will encounter a good or a frightening Vāyu. In the *Old Avesta*, the unsuccessful poet-sacrificers travel through Vāyu, subsisting only on their pathetic poetry,[67] different from the Avestan poet-sacrificers, whose souls are fed and clothed by the *Gāthā*s in the beyond.[68]

Other Young Avestan deities include Verthragna, the victorious warrior god who smashes the resistance/valor of his opponents; Rashnu, "the straightest," the god of straightness, who in the later literature is the judge who weighs the thoughts, words, and deeds of the dead on a balance; Apām Napāt, "scion of the waters," perhaps the deity of the fire in the clouds; and Narya Sangha or Naryō-sangha, "the manly announcement," the divine messenger.

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The *Khwarnah*

This is not a deity but an apparently luminous substance that is somehow crucial for growth and birth. There are three kinds, the Aryan *khwarnah*, the *khwarnah* of the *kawi*s (see below), and the "unseizable" *khwarnah* (uncertain translation); all three are listed with heavenly Fire in the *Sī-rōza*.[69]

The Aryan *khwarnah* was made by Ahura Mazdā as a weapon against the powers of evil.[70] The *khwarnah* of the *kawi*s is closely connected with the cosmogonic activities of Ahura Mazdā and the human sacrificers,[71] specifically with the growth of the mountains;[72] when the sun or moon shines, divine beings gather and distribute it over the earth;[73] it followed the mythical sacrificers (see below); and the two spirits fought over it.[74] It is also sometimes said to be placed in water.[75] Its myth, told in *Yasht* 19, locates it in the heavenly ocean Voru-kasha, where heroes (Yima, the Fire) and villains (Frangrasiyān, see below) try to catch it, but the myth is not well understood.

The word has been translated in various ways. (Divine) Fortune and (divine) Munificence (plural: the divine gifts of fortune) cover some of the apparent implications of this concept, but perhaps not all. (Later, in Bactria, it was identified with Greek Tukhē, also identified with Latin Fortuna.) To express the notion of luminosity, the term has often been translated as Glory, implying light, but this is problematic, as it also evokes "fame and glory."

The Life-Giving Poetic Thought (manthra spanta)

Ahura Mazdā's "breath-soul" is said to be his "life-giving poetic thought," that is, the sacred utterance of his thoughts.[76] Haoma is said to hold its "reins and chariot-handles,"[77] and elsewhere it is closely associated with the rising sun[78] and so presumably also represents its chariot in the Avestan myth. It can be rendered for short as Ahura Mazdā's Holy Word.

Evil Gods and Demons

The Dark Spirit also has his collaborators, foremost among them the cosmic deception, the Lie (*druj*), which seems to represent the original female nature of chaos. Others are Wrath (*aēshma*), fought and vanquished by Sraosha (see above), and several counterparts to the Life-giving Immortals, such as Evil Thought (*aka manah*), opponent of Good Thought.

The generic word for the deities of chaos is *daēwa* (Old Indic *deva*), which was inherited from the pre-Iranian past and therefore, in Iran, at first probably referred to the (bad) "old gods." Among them we find Indra, Sarwa, and Nāhathya (corresponding literally to Old Indic Indra, Sharva, and the two Nāstayas); Apaosha, the demon of drought, fought and vanquished by Tishtriya; and others.

According to the *Old Avesta*, the *daēwa*s were engendered by evil thought;[79] they were not originally evil, but they made wrong choices, which put them in the camp of the Dark One.[80]

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Some evil beings, for instance, Azhi Dahāka, were "whittled forth" by the Dark Spirit.[81]

Geography of the Two Worlds

As far as we can deduce, the Avestan cosmos was viewed as a sphere, with the sky surrounding everything and the earth situated somewhere in the middle.

Geography of the World of Thought

The upper part of the cosmic sphere contains the heavenly bodies, the stars, moon, and sun, which in the Pahlavi texts are said to be on individual levels at increasing distances from the world of the living and to correspond to good thoughts, words, and deeds. The progress of the soul after death through these three stages, therefore, probably also corresponds to the star, moon, and sun levels,[82] as well as the progress of the Life-giving Immortals on their way home to the House of Song.[83] In addition, *Yasht* 12 (dedicated to Rashnu) enumerates, after the sun, the Lights without beginning, the Best Existence of the Orderly ones, and the House of Song, which are either listed in order of increasing distance from the world of the living or refer to more or less the same place. The House of Song is the abode of Ahura Mazdā, the Life-giving Immortals, and the souls of the departed righteous.

The "intermediate (?) place" (*miswāna gātu*), which is listed with the above in some texts,[84] according to the Pahlavi texts contains the souls of those whose good and bad deeds were of equal weight. The *Chinwad-pertu*, the bridge over which the souls must pass, was originally the ford or bridge of the "accountant," that is, the place where, according to the Pahlavi texts, one's good and bad thoughts, words, and deeds were totaled and weighed on the scales of Rashnu. It goes from the ridge of Mount Harā and over to the world of thought.

The sky (*asman*) is said to be on high, and the positions of the sky and earth are likened to a bird on its egg. The sky is also said to stand in the world of thought, "firmly held together, with distant borders, in the shape of gleaming bronze" (Yt.13.2).[85]

Surrounding the earth inside the sky is Vāyu, the intermediate space (see above).

Stars and Constellations

The following identifications are certain or at least probable: Mithra (the morning star), Tishtriya (Sirius, or Dog Star), Satawaēsa (Fomalhaut), the Tishtriyaēnīs (Procyon), the Parwiyaēnīs (the Pleiades), Upa-parwiya (Aldebaran), Vanant (Vega), and the Seven Nails (Ursa Minor, the Little Dipper). The Haptō-ringas, the "Seven Markers (?)" (Ursa Major), resist sorcerers and witches (Yt.8.12)[86] and are, according to the Pahlavi texts, the guardians at the entrance to hell. The *merzu*, "following its own law before (the others?)," is the one "who battles the most of all the creations" (V.19.42).[87]

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Other mythological entities in the other world were probably also identified with stars or constellations, for instance, the Daēnā Māzdayasni (Mazdayasnian Daēnā) in the shape of a belt, which Haoma wears on the highest mountains,[88] and the martial deities accompanying Mithra.

Meteorology and Climate

The wind (*vāta*) and the clouds (*dunman*) are pulled across the sky by two fleet coursers.[89] Their place is in the space intermediate between the earth and the sky, but below the top of Mount Haratī.[90] The coming of the rainy season is described in the hymn to Tishtriya.[91]

Winds come from different directions: the south wind furthers the world and makes it grow,[92] and the wind coming from the right sweeps the firmament clean.[93] The wind is characterized as "sustaining Order," "life-giving," and "giving good gifts"[94] and is deified as the impetuous (*darshi*)[95] or victorious (*verthrajan*) wind.[96] It comes (or blows) from above, below, in front, or in back.[97]

Wind, rain (*vāra*), fog (*maēga*), and hail (*fyahwa*) were fashioned by Ahura Mazdā for Ardwī Sūra,[98] and heavy snow (*vafra*) with subsequent snowmelt caused the Flood during Yima's reign.[99]

After the Flood, the climate of the Aryan Expanse did not remain in the perfect state of Yima's reign, when the wind was neither too hot nor too cold.[100] Instead, it had "two months of summer, ten of winter, when the water, earth, and plants are frozen, and heavy snowfalls in the middle of the winter followed by excessive snowmelts."[101]

Geography of the World of the Living

The world was apparently conceived as a great sphere. In the center lies the earth surrounded by the great world-ocean, the Voru-kasha Sea. The earth is divided into seven "continents" (*karshwar*, literally, probably "field marked by furrows"; the word is often translated with the archaic word "clime"), six of which are arranged around the central continent of Khwani-ratha ("where the chariot wheels sing"?). The sevenfold division is mentioned in the *Gāthās*, where "a seventh of the earth" seems to be referred to as the only place where the *daēwa*s have achieved fame.[102]

	Vorubarshti	Vorujarshti
Sawah	Khwaniratha	Arzah
	Vidadafshu	Fradadafshu

THE SEVEN CONTINENTS

The location of the seven continents is not specified in the *Avesta*, where they are listed in pairs,[103] and the Pahlavi texts are unclear about it. According to

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the Pahlavi texts, Fradadafshu and Vidadafshu were in the south and Vorubarshti and Vorujarshti in the north, but the texts also say that when the sun rises, it shines on Arzah, Fradadafshu, Vidadafshu, and one-half of Khwaniratha, and, when it sets, on Sawah, Vorubarshti, Vorujarshti, and the other half of Khwaniratha.

Another reference to the nature of the earth is "the middle third of this earth," which is where Haoma bound Frangrasiyān.[104]

Lands

There are several lists of lands in the *Young Avesta*. In *Yasht* 13 to the *frawashi*s, the sustainers of Order are listed as Aryans, Tūrians, Sarimas, Sāinus, and Dāhis. Of these, it is tempting to identify the Sarimas with the Sarmatae of Herodotus, a people living in Central Asia, and the Dāhis with the Dahae, in historical times a people living east of the Caspian Sea.

In *Yasht* 10 to Mithra, we have a description of the area "settled by the Aryans," which Mithra surveys as he rises over Mount Harā and the mountain peaks and sees the rivers rushing down from the mountains to Mount Ishkata and Mount Paruta, Margu (Merv), Haraēwa (Herat), Gawa and the Sugdas (Sogdiana), and Khwārizam (Chorasmia), then on to the seven continents, especially "healing" Khwani-ratha, settled and inhabited by the Gawas.

The first chapter of the *Videvdad* contains a description of the places and settlements made by Ahura Mazdā to prevent all the world from moving into the first place he made, Aryana Vaējah, the Aryan Expanse, on the Good Lawful River. This long list is similar to the lists by which Darius and Xerxes list their territories and may therefore be a literary form used to describe the extent of a kingdom. The names with equivalents in the Achaemenid inscriptions are identifiable in historical times. The others partly refer to unknown districts, partly to mythical entities: Aryana Vaējah, Gawa inhabited by the Sugdas, Margu, Bākhdhī (Bactria), Nisāya between Margu and Bākhdhī, Haraēwa, Vaēkerta, Urwā, Xnanta inhabited by the Verkānas (Hyrcanians), Harakhwatī (Arachosia), the Haētumant (Helmand) River, Ragā "of three tribes," Caxra, Varna the four-cornered, the Seven Rivers, the falls (?) of the river Rahā.

The identity of Ragā has been much disputed. The name itself is identical with that of Achaemenid Ragā, a town in Media, and Greek Rhages, east of modern Ray, south of Tehran.

The list is probably of the common archaic type in which creation starts in the center (Aryana Vaējah) and then spreads out to cover known and mythical areas, to end at the borders of the earths with the seven world rivers (see below) and the source of the mythical Rahā.

Mountains

The following are the principal mountains mentioned in the *Young Avesta*. Further details about them are found in the later literature.

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Mount Harā the Tall, which rises above the clouds and into the world of thought,[105] is also the mountain that Mithra scales as he comes up, when it is illuminated by the first rays of the sun.[106] This is Pahlavi Harīburz, which was Arabicized to Alburz and identified with the mountain chain north of Tehran.

From Mount Hukarya, Ardwī Sūrā Anāhitā "falls down a thousand men in height/depth."[107]

The Ridge (*taēra*) of high Haratī stands in the middle of the earth, and the sun, moon, and stars revolve around it.[108]

Mount Ushi-darna, perhaps "crack of dawn," reaches up into the free spaces of Order.[109]

The entrance to hell is located on the Neck (*grīwā*) or Skull (*kamarda*) of Arzura.[110]

Mount Aryō-khshutha is the place where Erkhsha (Persian Aresh) of speedy arrows shot his arrow to Mount Khwanwant (Mount Sunny) to delimit the territory of the Aryans.[111]

Mount Ushadā (the Neck?) is near Lake Kansaoya.[112]

Other mountains are listed in *Yasht* 19 and *Yasna* 10.11, several of which have names that have survived till this day.

Seas and Lakes

The Voru-kasha Sea is the world-ocean, which surrounds the seven continents and, according to the Pahlavi texts, partly separates Xwanirah from the others, making it a peninsula. According to the *Young Avesta*, it is also the heavenly ocean.

To cleanse the world of all its pollution, Ahura Mazdā makes the waters of the Voru-kasha Sea flow down through the clouds and carry all the filth into the Pūtikā ("rotten") Sea, where the roaring waters filter it out and then return it to the Voru-kasha Sea.[113]

Of lakes, there are Lake Kansaoya, in which Zarathustra's semen is preserved and from which his three future sons will be born (see above); Lake Chaēchasta, on the shore of which Kawi Haosrawa sacrificed;[114] Lake Haosrawaha, mentioned in connection with Kawi Haosrawa;[115] and Lake Pishinah, where Kersāspa sacrificed to Ardwī Sūrā.[116]

Rivers

The seven rivers (*hapta hindu*) were perhaps thought to be distributed around the world as the spokes in a wheel and to come down from Mount Us-hindawa, "where the rivers go up," which stands in the middle of the Voru-kasha Sea. There is one river in the east and one in the west.[117]

The rise (? *sanaka*) and falls (? *aoda*) of the river Rahā are prototypes of distant objects.[118] The Rahā is also said to be as deep as a thousand men (standing

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on top of one another.[119] It has a subsidiary, Guda, where Kersāspa sacrificed to Vāyu.[120]

The river Dānu was the prototypical longest river, as in the expression "the width of the earth, the length of the Dānu, the height of the sky."[121] In the *Aogmadaēca*, the path the soul has to travel through Vāyu is likened to obstacles in this world, among them "deep Dānu flowing up from the bottom,"[122] and in the *Nīrangestān*, the priest bringing the water (see above) is called "the one who leads up the Dānu" (*dānu-uzwāza*).[123]

The river called the "good, lawful one," *Vahwī dātiyā*, was in Aryana Vaējah in the middle of the world. This is where Ahura Mazdā sacrificed to Ardwī Sūrā and Vāyu, Zarathustra sacrificed in order to overcome the Dark Spirit and his *daēwa*s,[124] and so on.

The Haētumant river system, modern Helmand, is described in detail in *Yasht* 19.[125]

Mankind

The totality of beings living in social structures is encompassed by the bipartite formula "beasts and humans" (*pasu vīra*, *pasu nar*, *staora mashiya* [*martiya*]) or the tripartite formula "small and large animals and humans" (*pasu staora mashiya*), which is used in chapter 2 of the *Videvdad* together with dogs, birds, and fires to denote all living beings on earth during Yima's reign.

Origin

When Ahura Mazdā made the world of living beings and the existence with bones, he first made the two ancestors of humans and animals, Gaya Martān, "the Life with death," and the Gaw, the bovine (cow or bull), presumably in Aryana Vaējah, as told in the Pahlavi texts. Nothing much is said about them in the *Avesta*, but Gaya Martān, according to his name, must have been a composite being, containing both life and death, and so appropriate as ancestor of the human race, whose characteristics are to be born, live, and die.

A detail of the myth of Gaya Martān is found in the hymn to the *frawashi*s, where it is said that Ahura Mazdā fashioned the umbilical cords (? *nāf*) and the seed (? *chithra*) of the Aryan lands from him.[126] This vaguely indicates that Gaya Martān may have been sacrificed, like the Old Indic Man (Purusha), to make the world, a myth that shows up in the later Zoroastrian tradition. Gaya Martān is not mentioned explicitly in the *Old Avesta*, but one passage seems to refer to him with its statement that "when the two spirits come together, one receives [conceives?] for the first time life [*gaya*] and non-living."[127]

The Gaw, too, has an important mythical function, as it is her breath that carries up to the gods her complaint about the lack of a protector in the primordial creation, which causes them to select Zarathustra as the first human poet-sacrificer.[128]

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The *Frawardīn yasht* contains several long lists of *frawashi*s of the dead, living, and unborn, which provides a glimpse into the mythical-historical traditions. Thus, as the first mortal being, Gaya Martān was the first to hear Ahura Mazdā's words,[129] while Madyōmāh was the first to hear Zarathustra's words,[130] and Saēnā, "who praised Order," the first on earth to have a hundred "students" (*aēthriya*).[131] These lists were once thought to contain reliable historical information and were used to calculate historical time spans (like the generations in Genesis), but the modern study of oral literature and history has shown that this is not possible.

The myth of the first human couple, born in the form of a rhubarb plant from the semen of Gayōmard escaping into the earth, told in the Pahlavi books, is not found in the *Avesta*. Their Pahlavi names Mashī and Mashiyānī (or Mahlī and Mahliyānī) are from Avestan *mashiya* "[mortal] man" and (unattested) *mashiyānī* "wife of [mortal] man" (cf. *ahura* and *ahurānī* "Ahura [Mazdā]'s women").

Constituents of Man

According to the *Old Avesta*, man is made up of several tangible and intangible constituents, fashioned and placed in him by Ahura Mazdā: the "life force" (? *gaēthā*), vision-soul (*daēnā*), and "guiding thought, wisdom" (*khratu*);[132] bones (*ast*) and life-breath (*ushtāna*), and preexisting soul or "pre-soul" (*frawashi*),[133] breath (*anma*), (breath-)soul (*urwan*), body (*tanū*), and form (*kerp*). "Form" is given by the *uta-yuti*,[134] which seems to mean "joining of woven tissues" and may refer to bodily "texture" or tissues. This term is commonly joined with *tawishī*, which may refer to some kind of strengthening material.[135] As the fundamental human constituents, the life-breath and the bones are offered up in sacrifice to give life and structure to new existence (*ahu*), for "Order to have bones."[136]

The longest Young Avestan lists of the constituents of man are life force, body, bones, life-breath, form, "tissue strength," consciousness, breath-soul, and pre-soul[137] and *ahu*, vision-soul, consciousness (*baodah*), breath-soul, and pre-soul.[138] Other lists are also found. Couples include *ahu* and body, breath-soul and pre-soul.[139] The exact meaning of *aŋhuuā/aŋvhā*, which can be cut or torn off ("life thread"?)[140] and purified,[141] is not known.

Of the three souls, the breath-soul carries the voice into the world of thought and leaves the body at death; the vision-soul permits the person to see in the world of thought and conducts the sacrifice up to the gods; and the pre-soul preexists the person. When a being is conceived, the pre-souls are sent down to assist in the formation of the embryo and the fetus in the womb, where they arrange the separate parts in the proper way and protect them until the time of birth;[142] when a being dies, its pre-soul returns to Ahura Mazdā, but comes down to earth for the New Year celebrations.[143]

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Divine beings, too, have pre-souls and breath-souls. Ahura Mazdā's pre-soul is the best, greatest, strongest, and most beautiful of all, and his breath-soul is said to be the "Holy Word" (*manthra spanta*;).[144] The Life-giving Immortals' pre-souls are strong, firm, and tall, and they observe one another's breath-souls as they travel through good thoughts, words, and deeds on their way to the House of Song.[145]

The "guiding thoughts" (*khratu*) are the "conveyors of the days" in the Old Avestan myth.[146] In the *Young Avesta* there are two, the one a person is born with and the one acquired through "hearing," that is, experience (*āsna khratu* and *gaoshō-sruta khratu*).[147] It is frequently associated with "leading" and paths, and so, in its nonmythical meaning, probably comes close to our "wisdom" as knowledge guiding behavior.

According to the *Young Avesta*, the two fundamental constituents of humans are bones (*asti*) and consciousness, which at death are "wrenched apart."[148] The consciousness and the breath-soul are demanded back as the share of living beings, [149] and those of "the life-giving bull giving good gifts" are sent up to the "nearest lights" by the sacrificers.[150] Consciousness can be lost temporarily from blows,[151] and it is lost permanently at death;[152] the most violent blows obliterate both consciousness and life-breath.[153] Zarathustra told the Dark Spirit he would not unpraise the *Daēnā Māzdayasni* were his bones, consciousness, and life-breath to be wrenched apart.[154] The consciousness seems to be related to smell (*baodi*), since it is carried by the wind.[155]

According to *Yasht* 13 to the *frawashi*s, the body parts include bones, intestines, muscles (?), sinews, and limbs, which are assembled in the amnion (*vyā*) when the fetus is made.[156] Other internal body parts are the heart (*zerdaya*), kidneys (*verdka*), and spleen (*sperza*).

The Soul after Death

All living beings in this world are predestined to die. The story of what happens to the (breath-)soul and the vision-soul/*daēnā* is one of the more popular narratives in the Zoroastrian tradition.[157]

After death, (breath-)soul (*urwan*) and bones are wrenched apart by the "bone-untier" (*astō-vīdātu*), who also binds the dead person with a rope, while Vayu leads him bound.[158] The breath-souls travel into the beyond, where their *daēnā*s await them and where they are judged at the Ford of the Accountant (*chinwatō pertu*, *chinwad-pertu*), which is where rewards or punishments are meted out according to the total account of the persons good and evil thoughts, words, and deeds. According to the *Old Avesta*, the *daēnā*s lead the souls of the wicked to the Ford of the Accountant, where they will be terrified,[159] and then on to the "worst existence" of darkness,[160] while the righteous will be led across the ford.[161]

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According to the brief description in the nineteenth chapter of the *Videvdad*, after death the soul remains by the dead body for three days, where it (the body or soul) is torn by the evil gods. At the dawn of the third day, the soul is led bound by the demon Drag-off (*vizarsha*; other texts have Vāyu) along paths "set by (or in) Time (*zruwan*)" to the Ford of the Accountant, where it is met by a royal-looking female with dogs. She drags the evil breath-souls to hell, but leads the good ones up Mount Harā the Tall, across the ford. Here it is questioned by Good Thought, who sits on a golden throne, and, having satisfied the questioner, it is admitted into the House of Songs and the company of Ahura Mazdā and the Life-giving Immortals.

According to the more detailed narrative of the second chapter of the *Hādōxt nask*, during the first three nights the souls sit reciting *Yasna* 46 from the *Gāthā*s, experiencing as much happiness or unhappiness as in their entire lives. At the dawn of the third day, the soul of the righteous finds itself in a beautiful garden, refreshed by a fragrant southerly breeze. In the wind, a beautiful woman approaches, which is the vision-soul/*daēnā* of the person and whose beauty is an expression of the person's good behavior in life. It is interesting to note here that the judgment has apparently already taken place. The soul then takes three steps upward, represented by good thoughts, words, and deeds, and a fourth, which brings it to the Endless Lights. Here they question it about its journey, but Ahura Mazdā tells them to stop bothering it and to bring the "spring butter," which is the food of the righteous after death.

The opposite happens to the souls of the wicked, who are dragged down into the Endless Darkness and before the Dark Spirit and his companions.

There is no suggestion in the *Avesta* of a balance wielded by Rashnu (as in the Pahlavi texts), unless his name itself, perhaps "the straightener," alludes to it.

Evil People

People in the camp of the Dark Spirit, who contribute to his strength, are first of all those who sacrifice to the evil gods (*daēwa-yasna*). These are mentioned in various contexts in the *Avesta*, which does not necessarily imply an organized cult. The cosmogonic myth by itself, however, implies that the powers of darkness must have been strengthened by sacrifices, since they regularly take over. Their sacrifices are described in the hymn to Ardwī Sūrā Anāhitā, who tells Zarathustra that the libations that those who sacrifice to evil gods offer her at night are ridiculed and rejected.[162] The ritual performed by the Viyāmburas, who sacrifice to evil gods in the hymn to Verthragna, involves the use of the juniper plant and salt offered to the fire.[163]

Among individuals who contribute to the reign of evil are the following four, who are said to make the Lie pregnant: he who does not give a share of his winnings to a righteous man; he who urinates standing; he who "loses" his semen while asleep; and evil women (fifteen years and older) who go about without tying the sacred girdle.[164]

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People excluded from sacrifices include people with various bodily defects and illnesses, but also the wife who bears no sons, the wife who bears a son for her husband that has been "made for another man," and newlywed husbands who do not immediately impregnate their young brides,[165] as well as people who know the *Gāthās* but do not perform them.[166]

Other people are evil because of committing acts that are against the law, including false teachers (*sāstar*) and false/incompetent priests (*kawis* and *karpans*), "villains" (*marya*), "obscurers of Order" (*ashamaogha*), four-legged wolves, thieves and violators, cattle-rustlers, and murderers, as well as various male and female magicians—sorcerers (*yātu*), witches (*parikā*), those possessed by sorcerers, and others (*kakhwarda, kayada, zanda*, all uncertain functions)—and in general those who harm or kill good people.[167]

Note that there is no evidence in the *Avesta* of the *Männerbünde*, bands of young men, assumed for ancient Iran by some scholars.

As it is contrary to god's intention for the world, which is procreation and birth, intercourse that does not fulfill this purpose is evil. Sexual transgressions by men therefore include ejaculating in menstruating and pregnant women or prostitutes, impregnating women who are off-limits, and having intercourse without ejaculating. Ejaculating in a pregnant woman is said to be no better than grilling one's own son and offering the fat to the fire.[168]

Male-to-male intercourse is especially evil, the degree of the sin depending on whether one assumes the active or passive role and whether the act is consensual or forced. A man who is forced to have intercourse will be punished but acquitted of misdeed, while a man who willingly submits to intercourse or commits it is irredeemable. After death, both the active and passive (willing) partners will become evil gods in the world of thought.[169]

The most evil woman is the one who has indiscriminate intercourse and mingles the semen of the good and the wicked or who has intercourse during her period without telling her partner, thus polluting him with menstrual offal.[170] Other sins include self-inflicted abortion if impregnated by someone other than her legal husband, as well as abortion performed by an "old woman."[171]

The Lexicon of Good and Evil

The good-evil opposition is to some extent reflected in the Avestan language in the use of "ahuric" and "daivic" terms. Terms such as *ashawan* ("sustainer of Order, righteous") and *ahura* ("lord"), on the one hand, and *drugwant* ("possessed by the Lie, wicked") and *daēwa*, on the other hand, refer intrinsically to good and evil respectively. A few central terms are ambivalent and refer to one or the other depending on the context, for instance *kawi*, which refers to poet-sacrificers fighting either on the side of good or of evil. The negative connotation occurs in the *Old Avesta* in the phrase *kawis* and *karpans*, which refers to the rivals and opponents of the Old Avestan sacrificer, whose prototype was Zarathustra. Not all *kawis* and *kar-*

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*pan*s were evil by definition, but the reprehensible behavior of some gave the terms a bad reputation.[172] The positive connotation is found when *kawi* is applied to Vishtāspa, one of the many who followed in the footsteps of Zarathustra.[173] Another such ambivalent term is *sāstar* "teacher," which in certain contexts takes on the implication of "false teacher."[174]

Many body parts have two names, one positive and one negative. Thus we have *sar* and *kamarda* ("head"), of which the second refers exclusively to demonic beings. Similarly, *chashman* and *ashi* ("eye"), *gaosha* and *karna* ("ear"), *zasta* and *gawa* ("hand"), and a few others.

Some actions, as well, come in pairs, for instance, demonic beings move by "falling" (*pata-*) or "running" (*dwara-*), as opposed to "walking, going," and "speaking deceptively" (*dawa-*) instead of "talking."

The Mythical Sacrificers in the World of the Living

In the *Young Avesta*, especially the *yasht*s,[175] several characters are listed, always in the same order, as sacrificing—some successfully, some not—to various gods to obtain their wishes. In the later Iranian epic traditions this sequence is interpreted as dynasties of rulers, but in the *Avesta* no family relationships are indicated, and it is clear from the fact that several of them have parallels in Indic and even older mythology that their historicity is a modern interpretation. It is not unlikely, however, that the list represents an imagined chronological sequence in the history of the world from its beginning down to the Zarathustra.

In *Yasht* 13, the *frawashi*s of all beings in the world of thought and of mythical and, apparently, legendary living beings are listed in several lists, from the first sacrificer in the world of thought, Ahura Mazdā, to the last in the world of living beings, Astwad-erta (see below). The first list begins with Gaya Martān and Zarathustra[176] and is followed by several individuals known only by name, then by three sons of Zarathustra, and finally Vishtāspa and others associated with him. Another list begins with Yima and Thraētaona and contains a long list of *kawi*s, Kersāspa, Haoshiyangha, and the women of Zarathustra's family, and other names.[177]

It is possible that these stories were already part of the Iranian epic tradition, but, as in the case of the myths, the references are too brief and allusive, and the Pahlavi and Persian versions do not necessarily reflect the Avestan stories faithfully, for example, the stories of Yima's (Jamshid) fall from grace[178] and Kawi Haosrawa's revenge for Siyāwarshan.[179]

Haoshiyangha and Takhma Urupi

Heading the list is Haoshiyangha "established before/in front" (*para-dāta*). The meaning of his name is unknown, but his epithet may have been reinterpreted as meaning "created before (all others)" or "created in the beginning," hence his position at the

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beginning of the list. In most of the *yasht*s, he is described as having obtained his wish to overcome either all or two-thirds of all the evil gods and chase them back into the darkness, and he is said to have ruled on the sevenfold earth.[180]

Second in the list is Takhma Urupi, whose name *urupi* may be related to words for "fox." He mounted the Dark Spirit as his steed and rode him for forty years to the ends of the world.[181]

Yima

Third in the list is Yima, one of the figures from Indo-Iranian mythology to have survived in both Indic (Yama) and Iranian literature. The Indian Yama is the son of the solar figure Vivasvant, while Yima is the son of Viwahwan(t), a name that must have meant literally "he who shines far and wide."

Yima was associated with a variety of myths, among them the Iranian Flood story.[182] In the *Avesta*, he is described as the first ruler of the earth and his rule as a golden age, during which living beings were immortal. The resulting overpopulation made him expand the earth three times, to twice its original size, after which the population growth had to be curbed by a natural catastrophe, a flood resulting from the snowmelt after extreme snowfalls. Yima saved the earth's population of living things from annihilation by building an enclosure (bunker), in which select specimens were housed during the winter. To build the enclosure, he taught mankind to make mud bricks. To avoid contaminating postflood humanity with individuals belonging to the evil creation, Ahura Mazdā told Yima not to let any defective human beings into the enclosure.

The other myth associated with Yima in the *Avesta* is that of his fall from divine favor. This myth is alluded to already in the *Old Avesta*, but in allusive terms (Y.32.8).[183] In the *Young Avesta*, however, we are told that, as a result of an untrue statement, the Fortune (*khwarnah*) with which he was endowed left him (Yt.19.30–34).[184]

Dragons and Dragon Slayers

Next in the list of sacrificers comes Azhi Dahāka, the Giant Dragon, with three mouths, three heads, six eyes, and a thousand wiles, who asked for power to decimate the world of humans, a wish he was not granted.

Thraētaona son of Āthwiya asked for the ability to slay Azhi Dahāka, a wish he was granted. Having killed the dragon, Thraētaona rescued Yima's two beautiful sisters. According to the later tradition, Frēdōn (Thraētaona) divided the world between his three sons, Salm, Tūz, and Ērij, who are named after the peoples listed in *Yasht* 13 as Aryas, Tūriyas, and Sarimas.[185] Another myth connected with Thraētaona is that of Pārwa the sailor, who was tossed up into the air by Thraētaona and flew about for three days and nights before he asked Ardwī Sūrā for help and finally managed to get home.[186] He is said to have had only one hand and arm and may have brought down the river Raha.[187] His myth is of Indo-Iranian origin and is related to two separate Old Indic myths.

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The next dragon slayer was Kersāspa of the Sāmas, a curly-headed youth, whose father, Thrita of the Sāmas, was granted the wish to sire two sons, Urwākhshaya and Kersāspa. Thrita was also the first healer, as described in *Videvdad* 20. In the hymn to Haoma, it is told how Kersāspa cooked his noon meal on the back of a horned, man- and horse-devouring, venomous dragon, thinking it was a green hill, but the dragon awakened and scared Kersāspa away.[188] Elsewhere, Kersāspa is said to have exacted revenge upon Hitāspa for the slaying of his brother Urwākhshaya, about whom nothing else is known, and to have slain the *gandarva* (Old Indic *gandharva*), a beast that was destroying all living beings.[189]

The *Kawis* and the First Great War

We then enter the time of what is, in the later tradition, the great war between the Iranian *kawi*s and the Turanian Frangrasiyān (Persian Afrāsiāb).

The full list of *kawi*s is found in *Yasht*s 13 and 19: Kawāta, Apiwohu, Usan (Usadan), Arshan, Pisina, Biyarshan, Siyāwarshan, and Haosrawah.

In the *yasht*s, Frangrasiyān's constant wish is to obtain the Aryan Fortune (*khwarnah*) in order to reintroduce chaos into Ahura Mazdā's creation. He is, however, never granted any support by the deities whom he implores for help and is not able to seize the Fortune, which keeps eluding him.

In the end, to take "filial" revenge for his father, Kawi Siyāwarshan, Kawi Haosrawah has Frangrasiyān captured and brought to him to kill. In *Yasht*s 5 and 9, it is the Haoma who finally manages to capture and bind Frangrasiyān and bring him to Kawi Haosrawah, a version of the story also preserved by Ferdowsi.

This kind of universal battle is commonplace in Indo-European literatures, and the story does not permit us to draw any conclusions about the prehistory of the Iranians and their neighbors.

Vishtāspa and the Second Great War

After Kawi Haosrawah, we reach the time of Zarathustra (Zarad-ushtra, "he who has angry camels"?), Kawi Vishta-aspa/Vishtāspa ("he who gives his horses free reins"), and the battle with Arjad-aspa ("he who has valuable horses") and his *daēwa*-worshipping Khiyonians. Several of the characters who are included in this event in the *Young Avesta* are also mentioned in the *Old Avesta*, notably Kawi Vishtāspa and the brothers Frasha-ushtra and Djāma-aspa/Jāmāspa ("the one with fat camels" and "the one with scrawny horses"?), but there are no narrative details connected with them.

In the *Young Avesta*, Jāmāspa is said to have sacrificed to Anāhitā as he confronted an army of *daēwa*-worshippers, and Kawi Vishtāspa and Zariwari (Pahlavi Zarēr, Wishtāsp's brother) are said to have asked for power to vanquish and slay Arjad-aspa and other Khiyonians.

Kawi Vishtāspa is also involved in a myth in which he supports and delivers the *daēnā* of Ahura Mazdā and Zarathustra out of what is apparently some kind of

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confinement (see above) and to have found space for Order in tree and rock,[190] that is, a way for the sun to escape from its nighttime imprisonment in the rock.[191] He is a prototypical winner of the ritual race, his horses arriving before all others, and so a model for the current sacrificer to emulate.[192]

Spantō-dāta, son of Vishtāspa (Persian Esfandiār), is mentioned only in the list of *frawashi*s in *Yasht* 13, as are several women: Frēnī and Hwōwī (according to the later tradition, Zarathustra's grandmother and wife), Poru-chistā ("the one noticed by many"[?], Zarathustra's daughter), Hutausā (Vishtāspa's wife), and Humāyā (Vishtāspa's daughter?).[193] Zarathustra's mother, Dugdōwā ("she who milks the cows"), is mentioned in an Avestan fragment only.[194]

Non-historicity of the *Kawis*

In the *Gāthā*s, the term *kawi* is closely related to terms such as *karpan* and *usij*, which both designate special kinds of priests, and its Indian relative *kavi*, which designates the poet-sacrificer. In the *Young Avesta*, the *kawi*s are also primarily represented as sacrificers, but in the later Zoroastrian tradition and, especially, in the Persian epic tradition, they have become rulers, from which it was early concluded, though wrongly, that *kawi* meant "prince, ruler." It has been a matter of some speculation whether any of these *kawi*s were actually historical figures. If they were, then the *Avesta* would have preserved valuable historical information about the prehistory of the Iranian tribes in Central Asia after their separation from the Indians.

The most exhaustive study on this subject was done by Arthur Christensen in his book on the Kayanian dynasty of Iran, *Les Kayanides*. In it he argued that the rulers who are called Kawi in the *Avesta* (Kawi Kawāta, etc.) were most probably historical figures, in contrast to those preceding them, who did not carry this title and were probably just mythological figures (Yima, Thraētaona, etc.), but his argumentation was based on the assumption that Zarathustra was historical, hence also his "royal patron" Kawi Vishtāspa. The later Iranian hero Rostam is not mentioned in the *Avesta*.

The list of *kawi*s contains at least one figure that is also found in Indian tradition, as shown by H. Lommel and G. Dumézil, namely, Kawi Usan, who both by name and by the legends associated with him corresponds to Kavi or Kāvya Ushanas in the Indian tradition. There is therefore good reason to conclude that the list of Kawis, as well, contains only mythological figures.

It should be kept in mind, however, that if we do postulate the historicity of the *kawi*s and Zarathustra, nothing is gained, as they do not show up in any historical record, and there is no record of the great war. All in all, it seems most likely that the Avestan *kawi*s, like the Rigvedic *kavi*s, were "poet-sacrificers of old."

The Zarathustra Myth

In the Young Avestan lists of sacrificers, Zarathustra precedes Kawi Vishtāspa, with whom he is also somehow connected in the *Old Avesta*. In the *Young Avesta*, he is described as a prototypical poet-sacrificer assisting Ahura Mazdā in overcoming

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evil, as an epic hero combating the Dark Spirit, and as the first member of the social divisions—first priest, warrior, and farmer (see below).[195] He is also portrayed as a lawgiver, as the originator of "the Law discarding the *daēwa*s" (*dāta vi-daēwa*)[196] and in general of any other instructions in the *Avesta* by virtue of having received them from Ahura Mazdā.

Unlike those preceding him in the list of sacrificers, who sacrificed to the other great gods, Zarathustra is portrayed as the first to have sacrificed to Ahura Mazdā, as well as to the other gods at Ahura Mazdā's instigation.[197]

Zarathustra's role as prototypical poet-sacrificer is mentioned frequently. The principal text is the hymn to the *frawashi*s, which contains the longest passage devoted to this aspect of Zarathustra, "who was the first of the world of living beings to praise Order and scorn the evil gods."[198] In the hymn to Haoma, Zarathustra is depicted as tending the fire and chanting the *Gāthā*s and reciting the *Ahuna variya* to banish the evil gods.[199]

Zarathustra's installation as first poet-sacrificer is told toward the beginning of the *Gāthā*s, in a famous poem in which the sacrificer's breath(-soul) and that of the cow have ascended to the house of Ahura Mazdā. There, the cow complains to Ahura Mazdā and those with him of the hardships suffered by the good living among the wicked. It is suggested that someone needs to be assigned to her as her protector, and Ahura Mazdā points out that he already has the ritual implements for performing a sacrifice and only needs someone to bring them down to the mortals. Such a one exists, namely Zarathustra.[200]

Zarathustra's fight against the powers of evil is the most important feature of his Young Avestan legend. Before him, the evil gods roamed about on the earth freely in the shape of men, abducting their women; but, while the task of his predecessors included obtaining control and command over men and evil gods, Zarathustra, by reciting the *Ahuna variya*, forced the evil gods to hide underground and to scurry back into hell.[201] Zarathustra also fought the Dark Spirit himself, who was terrified of Zarathustra already at his birth. In one version of the legend, Zarathustra smote him with the *Ahuna variya* and burnt him with the *Ashem vohū*, making him run away from the earth.[202] In another, the Dark Spirit promised Zarathustra a mighty reward if he "praised back" the good Mazdayasnian *Daēnā*, but Zarathustra instead performed a purification ritual (exorcism) and made the Dark Spirit and all the evil gods run back into hell.[203]

In Middle Eastern and Western medieval historiography, the traditions of the origins of the known great cultures, Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian, were all considered to be real history. Thus, in their histories of mankind, as told from the Flood, historiographers included both the Old Testament figures and Zarathustra, as well as the Old Iranian history as known from the classical authors. Here, Zarathustra was depicted as the wise man of the East, a prophet and lawgiver like Moses and a philosopher like the Greek philosophers. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially after the *Avesta* became known in Europe, scholars maintained this image of Zarathustra, but also incorporated the entire epic tradition, already known from the *Shahnameh* and now also from the *Avesta* and the Pahlavi texts, in their historical descriptions of Iran.

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When the *Avesta* and several Pahlavi texts were first published in 1771 and presented as the words of Zoroaster, the great lawgiver, people were surprised and disappointed at the lack of sublimity of the texts and ridiculed both them and Zarathustra. This led to a period of conflict in Iranian studies between those who refused to let go of the traditional Zarathustra image and those who doubted he was a historical person or, at least, that the texts were his words.

The problem was reduced toward the end of the nineteenth century, when it was proposed that only the *Gāthā*s were by Zarathustra himself, while the rest was much later. At the time, the *Gāthā*s were poorly understood, and it was easy to interpret them in a way that supported the traditional Zarathustra image. This opinion was then endorsed by several outstanding Iranists and became standard doctrine in Iranian studies up through the 1950s. The methods of modern historiography and the insights gained from the study of oral literature and oral history were never applied to the Zoroastrian texts.

In the 1960s, several studies appeared, of both Zoroastrianism and the *Gāthā*s, that cast heavy doubt on the traditional interpretations, but the defenders of the historical prophet Zarathustra mounted a strong defense against those who would take him "out of history." Still today, the field is divided between supporters and opponents of the traditional Western doctrine.

The End of the World

After Zarathustra, three future sons will be born from his semen, preserved in Lake Kansaoya.[204] The first two are Ukhshyad-erta "he through whom Order will grow" and Ukhshyad-nemah "he through whom reverence will grow," alluding to the gradually increasing strength of the sun and the gradual return of the world of living beings to its original state, before the attack. The last son is Astwad-erta "he through whom Order will (permanently) have bones."[205] When he "stands forth" with his companions, he will expel the Lie, Wrath, and the "Villain" (i.e., the Dark Spirit) from the world of the living, the world will be free from old age and decay, the dead will rise, and the world will be permanently full of vital juices (*frasha*).[206]

Human Occupations

Human activities are described mostly in the framework of the three or four social divisions (see below), but additional details are also found.

Laws, Deals, and Contracts

The ordered cosmos is regulated by rules established by Ahura Mazdā (*dāta*) and the relationships between gods and humans by mutual agreements (*vrata*).[207]

Contracts (*mithra*) were the strongest form of rules regulating human interaction and were valid for both the good and the evil, their value having been taught to

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Zarathustra by Ahura Mazdā himself.[208] Their guardian was Mithra, who punished those who "harmed" or "belied" them (*mithrō-zyā*, *mithrō-druj*). Contracts had, apparently, six different strengths according to *Videvdad* chapter 4: those agreed orally, by handshake, by the size of a sheep (i.e., concluded by promising a sheep), the size of a horse/bull, the size of a man, and the size of a land. The stronger ones would "wipe out" the weaker ones, and the punishment for breaking them was according to the "size" of the contract. According to *Yasht* 10, a contract between partners was twenty times as strong as a single contract, between communities thirty times, between teachers and pupils seventy times, between sons and fathers-in-law eighty times, between brothers ninety times, between father and son a hundred times, between countries a thousand times, and with the Mazdayasnian *daēnā* ten thousand times.[209]

The social hierarchy can be deduced from the strength of contracts between its members.

People and Sociopolitical Structures

The words for men, women, and children, as well as their contexts, permit us to tentatively define the family structures.

The man (*vīra*) was the father of children and master of the house (*nmānō-pati*), especially sons (*puthra*); the woman (*nārī*, *nārikā*) was the wife and the mistress of the house (*nmānō-pathnī*); and children under fifteen were underage (*a-pernāyu[ka]*, "boy not of full age"; *kanikā*, "girl").

The ideal home was one in which there was a husband and a wife, a fire, sons (and daughters), abundant pastures, a good herd of animals, and all things for good living.[210]

The ideal age was fifteen, the age of adulthood, which was the age of Yima and his father in the golden age of humanity, when there was no illness or death,[211] as well as the age when the sacred belt was first worn.[212]

A young woman (*kanyā*) was nubile at the age of fifteen, before which she was a virgin (*a-skandā* "unbroken") and "unapproached" (by men: *an-upaēta*).[213]

Already from Indo-European times, the ideal society was thought of as being composed of three main tiers: priests (*āthrawan*), warriors (*rathaēshtar*, "charioteer"), and farmers (*vāstriyō-fshuyant*, "who provides fodder and looks after the animals"). This triad is mentioned repeatedly in the *Young Avesta*, and its prototype was Zarathustra, who was the first member of all three. In some texts, the triad is expanded by the artisans, the *huti*,[214] a term that must originally, at least, have designated the weavers (*hu-uti*, "those of good weaving"), but may have been generalized to various kinds of artisans. Some kind of special or general craftsman is denoted by *hu-apah*, "whose work is good," whence *hao-apaha*, "artistry" (said of Ahura Mazdā's creative activity in the *Yasna hapta-hāti*).

According to the Young Avestan standard lists, society was divided into four increasing units: the house (home: *nmāna*), the town (village: *vis*), the tribe (whose members were related by birth?: *zantu*), and the "land" (*dahyu*). Each unit was headed by a "master" (*nmānō-pati*, etc.).

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In the *Old Avesta*, these terms are not found as lists, but the triad is implicit, while the four territorial units are less clear. The sequence "family" ("one's own": *khwaētu*), "household" (those living in the same yard[?]: *verzana*), and "community" (? *aryaman*) is found several times,[215] once followed by "lands" (*dahyu*).[216]

Both lists are clearly traditional and formulaic, and the texts do not contain further information as to what exactly they refer to.

Priests

In the *Avesta*, several types of priests are listed, but according to the manuscripts, only two were involved in the *yasna* sacrifice, the principal, or libating, priest (*zaotar*) and his assistant. There is no specific Avestan term for the assistant (he is called *rāspī*, from unattested Avestan **rāthwiya*, "the one in charge of the *ratus*"), and he speaks only to answer the libating priest. It is the libating priest who conducted all the formal rituals; Haoma is his prototype in the world of thought[217] and Zarathustra in this world (see above). It is also the libator who is entitled to the rewards for the sacrifice.[218] In the *Gāthās*, the priest who recites the sacred text is the *manthrān*, whose prototype is also Zarathustra.[219]

Eight priests, however, were needed for some rituals, such as the *vispered* ritual and the *videvdad sade* purification ritual: the *haoma*-pressing priest (*hawanān*); the fire-lighting priest (*ātr-wakhsh*); the presenting priest (*fraber-tar*); the tending priest, who brings the water (*ābert*, also called the *dānu-uzwāza*, "he who brings up the river Dānu"); the washing priest (*āsnātar*); the mingling priest (*raēthwish-kar*); and the auditing priest (*sraoshāwarz*), whose functions are described in the *Nīrangestān*.[220] These took up specific positions in the ritual area, also described in the *Nīrangestān*[221] but in practice were impersonated by the assistant priest. Other functions include the one who brings the sacrificial animal (*pasu-wāzah*).[222]

Matters concerning the education of priests are discussed in the fragmentary *Hērbedestān* "manual for priests," of which the beginning is missing. Questions on a variety of issues regarding religious behavior and the performance of rituals are asked and answered in the *Nīrangestān*.

Among faults committed by priests was the failure to recite the *Gāthās*, which could be atoned for with an excellent draft animal or a team of two draft animals (*agriyō-staora*, *bi-staora*). The fifth time, however, it became an *ardush* sin, and one's body was forfeit.[223]

There were also strict rules for clothing and ritual implements, and a priest who did not conform to the standards was not to be called a priest.[224]

War and Warriors

Military strategy is barely alluded to in the *Avesta*, but numerous weapons and items of armor are mentioned. The basic component of the army (*spāda*, *haēnā*) in battle

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was the straight (*rāshta*) battle line (*rasman*) with broad front (*perthu-anīka*), which the deities might break and cut up, thresh, and throw into confusion.[225] In *Yasht* 13, the pre-souls are said to break up the edges of the battle lines and make the middle bend.[226]

Soldiers were charioteers (*rathaēshtar*) and archers (*thanwani*). Good battle horses were swift (*arwant*) and could turn the chariots and wagons quickly.[227]

Arms included spears (*arshti*), knives (*karta*), cudgels (*vazra*), clubs (*gada*), bows (*thanwar*) with bowstrings (*jiyā*, some made from sinews of gazelles, *gawasna*), arrows (*ishu*) with metal tips (*ayō-agra*) and flighted with eagle or vulture feathers (*erzifyō-*, *karkāsō-parna*), quivers (*akana*) with room for thirty arrows and attached to a quiver belt (*zaēnu*), slings (*fradakhshanā*) with straps (?) made of sinews (*snāwar-bāzura*), and sling-stones (*asan fradakhshanya*). Clothing included armor (*zrāda*), breastplates (? *vārthman*), halberds (? *kūris*), face protection (*patidāna*), headgear (*sārawāra*, *khaoda*), belts (*kamara*), and thigh-protectors (*rāna-pāna*).[228]

Horse gear is described in the hymn to Mithra, whose horses were shod with shoes of gold and silver, had saddles (? *upari-spāta*) fastened with metal hooks, and were urged on by the horse whip (*ashtra*).[229]

Agriculture and Husbandry

Several aspects of agriculture are mentioned in the texts. The mythical paradigm is the fertilization of Life-giving Humility, the earth, by Ahura Mazdā, and in the *Videvdad* plowing is likened to sexual intercourse, both of which activities produce benefits for the plower.[230]

Things that please and displease the earth are listed in chapter 3 of the *Videvdad*. Among the things that please the earth are draining of waterlogged land and irrigation of dry land; fertilization by animal dung; cultivation of grass for hay, grain (barley), and various food-bearing plants; and plowing the earth. Water was conducted in canals (*ādu*).[231]

The production and harvesting of hay (*vāstar*) as food for cattle was of paramount importance, and its prototypical provider was Ahura Mazdā himself, whom the *Ahuna variya* made "a pastor (*vāstar*) for the poor." The mythical Aryan territory contained mountains with plentiful pasture (*poru-vāstra*) for domestic animals, richly watered (*āfantō*) by rivers and lakes,[232] while the wicked laid waste the pastures.[233] War and unseasonable rain or drought, which devastated the pastures, were therefore the agricultural disasters, and prayers for "peace and pasture" reached Ahura Mazdā daily. The witch of "bad seasons" (*dush-yāriyā*), combated by Tishtriya, was thought to cut off the life thread of the entire world with bones already before its destined passing.[234]

Domestic animals (camels, horses, cattle, sheep and goats, dogs) were kept in specific places, which were the responsibilities of specific people, as described in chapter 15 of the *Videvdad*.

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Several agricultural tools are mentioned, among them the plow (*aēshā*) with yoke (*yuwa*), yoke pin (*simā*), and yoke strap (*simōithrā*); cattle goad (*ashtra*); spades (*bakhdhra*), used to dig and make furrows; and iron or stone mortar and pestle.[235] When used as ritual implements, these tools had to be made according to specific rules (*dātiyō-kerta*).[236]

Artisans and Domestic Activities

All good Mazdayasnians should get up before dawn, when the rooster crowed. The rooster, who was the bird of Sraosha, was also his assistant priest (*sraoshāwarz*); by crowing, it told people to get up, scorn the evil gods, and praise Order. It also warned them against going back to sleep, which was a temptation brought on by the female demon of procrastination, *Būshiyanstā*, that is, she who says, "Sleep long, O man. There will be time!".[237]

Bread baking is probably described in the *Videvdad*, where the effects of the barley on the evil gods in its various stages from bud to bread are listed. The barley itself (*yawa*) is followed by a list of terms whose meanings are basically unknown, but which may be the ear (*sudu*), the flour (*pishtra*), and the bread lump (*gunda*). Only the last term seems secure, as it is what burns the mouth.[238]

There were two kinds of intoxicating beverages, *madu* and *hurā*.[239]

The manufacture of clothes is not described, but skins and woven cloth are mentioned.[240] The verb for domestic weaving must have been *wab-*, from which the past participle *ubda,* "woven," is attested by the adjective *ubdaēna*, "made from woven cloth," but the verb itself, *ufya-*, is found only in the specialized sense of "weaving (poems)." Another verb is *vaya-*, which is attested only in the *Old Avesta* in *vayathra*, some kind of weaving gear, and in the noun *hu-uti*, "artisan" (see above). The goddess Anāhitā wore a long-sleeved coat (*adka*) of beaver fur (*babraēnī*).[241]

Materials used for making implements included horn, wood (or plants), and metals, among them silver (*erzata*), gold (*zaranya*), bronze (*ayah*), and iron (? *haosafna*).[242] Gold was also used to decorate horse gear,[243] breastplates,[244] knives, [245] helmets, wheels, shoes, belts, etc.,[246] and brooches.[247]

Female finery included brooches (*minu*) and ear-hangings (*gaoshāwara*), some of them four-sided (*chathru-karana*) and adorned with wheels (*ratha.karya*).[248]

Construction

Houses (*nmāna*) were "built" (*mita*) or "built high" (*berzi-mita*[249]) and needed to be set up firmly (*vi-dā-*). They had columns (*stūnā*), which needed to be set apart and held up (*vi-dāraya-*), and doorposts (*anthiyā*), which needed to be supportive (*stabra*),[250] as well as various kinds of beams, porches, and rooms[251] and windows (*raochana*) and doors (*dwar*).[252]

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Fortifications could be made of mud bricks[253] and have stockades (*īra*), which needed to be straight[254] and rigid,[255] have struts supporting them (*apa-sraya-*), and be placed close together (*hathrāka-yasta*).

Marriage, Pregnancy, and Birth

There is little information about these facts of life. *Yasht* 13 appears to list the stages of a woman's lives as follows: ready for marriage (*vadut*), pregnant (*jag-rud*), giving birth (*fra-hād*, "sitting forth"), weeping (with birth pains?), raising (her child) well, of good lineage, of famed (?) father, with a good father. Her paradigm is Vispa-tarwarī, "she who overcomes all," the mother of the Revitalizer, Astwad-erta.[256]

A newborn child apparently becomes a legal person when the umbilical cord is cut (Avestan fragment in *Hērbedestān* 11). After birth, the woman has to undergo a rigorous purification ritual, the Gathic prototype of which is Ārmati's purification of mortal women after birth.[257]

If a woman is impregnated by someone other than her legal husband, an abortion can be performed by an "old woman" (*hanā*) using various plants, but the man, woman, and old woman are then all three guilty of a crime.[258]

Among the enormous penalties to be paid by somebody who kills an otter (*udra upāpa*) is what appears to be an obligation to give a virgin daughter or sister to other Mazdayasnians "to make her a woman" (*nārithwana*), but whether by marriage or not is not clear.[259]

Marriage with one's own closest (female) relatives (*khwaētu-wadatha*) is enjoined upon the Mazdayasnians, following the examples of Ahura Mazdā, who wedded his daughter Ārmati, and Zarathustra, who was both "father and husband" of his daughter Poru-chistā.[260] The *Avesta* mentions people living in such marriages only marginally; for instance, their urine, but not that of ordinary men and women, was used to purify a "corpse-cutter."[261] To what extent the custom was followed is not clear. The priest, for instance, may have "symbolically" wedded his *daēnā* in *khwaētu-wadatha*.[262]

Time and Time Divisions

When Ahura Mazdā set about arranging his cosmos, he cut (*thwars-*) a piece of time ("cut-out time") from unlimited, "not cut out" time, or time "long following its own law" (see above). Units of time were years (*sarda*), divided into six seasons (*yār*), twelve months (*māh*), and 360 + 5 days (*ayar*, *azar*) and nights (*khshap*). Larger spans are mentioned in the Yima myth in *Videvdad* chapter 2, where a period of three/six/nine hundred winters (*thri-satō-zima*, etc.) was the time it took for the earth to get overcrowded. The millennial count is mentioned in an Avestan fragment in the Pahlavi version of this chapter, where we find the question "for how long was the (temporal) existence in the world of thought made?" and the unclear statement "then Yima made Order a section of the first period of

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one thousand winters" (*hazangrō-zima*). These Avestan terms are also used in the Pahlavi texts.

Time measures include *bi-*, *thri-*, *nawa-khshapara*, "period of two/three/nine nights," and *ayar-*, *māz-*, *yār-*, *biyār-drājah*, "period of a day/month/season/two seasons." To express length of time, *sarda* or *abigāma*, "winter," were used.[263]

The year contained six seasonal festivals (five of five days each and one of ten, which divide the year into six parts, according to the Pahlavi texts). They are the following, with their description in the *Vispered*:[264]

> *hamaspathmaēdaya* (uncertain meaning), the five days before and five days after the beginning of the year, when the *frawashi*s come down; time to cut the "web" (of the old year?); it is also the time for the flocks to give birth
> *madyōi-zarmaya* "mid-green" (?), time for animals to suckle the young
> *madyōi-shma* "mid-summer," time to cut the hay
> *patish-hahya* "harvest time," time for harvesting
> *ayāthrima* (uncertain meaning), time for releasing the males in to the females to mate
> *madyārya sarda* "midseason," of the year (?)

The months have three points of division: the moon that is "inside" (*antar-māh*, new moon, the 1st), the full moon (*pernō-māh*, the 15th), and the day "with seven on either side" (*vīshaptatha*, the 23rd).

The months contained thirty days, which are listed in the *Sī-rōza*s of the *Khorda Avesta* together with their collaborators (not included here):

1 Ahura Mazdā
2 Vohu Manah
3 Asha vahishta
4 Khshathra variya
5 Spentā Ārmati
6 Harwatāt
7 Amertatāt
8 Dadush (Creator)
9 Ātar (fire)
10 Āpō vahwīsh (good waters)
11 Khwar-khshaēta (sun)
12 Māh (moon)
13 Tishtriya
14 Gaosh Tashan, Druwāspā
15 Dadush (Creator)
16 Mithra
17 Sraosha
18 Rashnu
19 *Frawashi*s of the righteous
20 Verthragna
21 Rāman Huwāstra, Vayu
22 Vāta (the wind)
23 Dadush (Creator)
24 Straightest Chistā, the Good Mazdayasnian Daēnā
25 Ashish Wahwī (good Ashi)
26 Arshtāt (rectitude)
27 Asman (the sky)
28 Zam Hudāh (the earth giving good gifts)
29 Manthra Spanta (the holy word)
30 Anagrā Raochāh (the Lights without beginning)

Days and nights are divided into five "times" (*gāh*), which are in turn associated with social divisions and divinities. In the *Yasna*, the list is headed by *Hāwani*, time of the haoma pressing, and the "town," but in the *Videvdad sade* by *Ushahina* and the "house," the smallest social entity:

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Time	Genius of	Genius of	Deities
Hāwani	*Sāwahi*		Mithra
morning	new life force?	the town (*vis*)	Peace with Good Pasture
Rapithwina			Best Order
noon	cattle-furthering	the tribe (*zantu*)	Ahura Mazdā's fire (the sun)
Uzayarina			Scion of the Waters
afternoon	man-furthering	the land (*dahyu*)	the Water
Abisruthrima abigaya			the *frawashi*s of the Orderly
evening	furthering-all-good-living	most like Zarathustra	the women to be won by men
night before midnight			the yearly good settlement
		the well-fashioned Force	
		the Obstruction-smasher	
		Victorious Superiority	
Ushahina			Sraosha, the obstruction-smasher
night after midnight	Berjiya?	the house	furtherer of living beings
		straightest Rashnu	
		Rectitude, furtherer of living beings, increaser of living beings	

Counting

Teens were formed as in English: "five-ten," etc. There is nothing remarkable about higher numbers, the highest being 10,000, multiples of which were expressed by "x times 101,000." The highest number was 99,999.

Compound numerals were of the type "5-and 20(-and)," for example, *panchā-ca haptāti* "75" and *panchā-ca vīsati-ca* "25."

There were also terms for "x times," "x-fold," and fractions.

Measures

Most Avestan names of measures are taken from body parts, human or animal. Measures include the following, where the exact values are of course unknown:

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"…" (*dbishi*, V.6.12)
"finger(-width), digit" (*erzu*, V.9.6)
"inch" (*dishti*; V.17.5, FO.27a)
"palm (3 inches)" (*uzashti*, FO.27a)
"span" (9 inches, *vitasti*, = 12 fingers, FO.27a)
"long span" (*fratara-vitasti*; V.8.76)
"ell" (*arathni*, OPers. *arashni*)
"cubit" (2 spans, *frārathni*; V.7.29)
"fathom" (*vibāzu*-; V.9.2)
"arm('s length)" (*frabāzu*)
"foot" (*pada*-; V.9.8, FO.27a)
"long foot?" (*frabda*, V.18.40)
"step, stride" (*-gāya*; V.9.8: *aēwō-gāya* "one step" = *thri-pada* "three feet"; V.17.4, FO.27a)
"league" (*hāthra*)
"2 leagues" (*tacar*)
"16 leagues" (*yujyasti*; Her.8.3, FO.)
"(length of a race) course" (*cartu*; V.2.25)

The digit varies according to which finger it is measured by, for instance, "as much as the digit of the middle finger."[265]

Length, including distance and time span, is often expressed by compounds with *drājah*, "length." Thus, depending on their state, dead bodies should be placed a "span" away from dry firewood, but a "long ell" from wet, or a "long ell" away from dry, but an "arm's" length from wet.[266] Distance from a corpse-burning fire should be a "long span."[267] Firewood should be inspected the length of a "long ell."[268] Other body measures include "the height of a knee" and "the height [?] of a tongue,"[269] a canal "as deep as (the height of) a dog, as wide as a dog";[270] water reaching "to the knees, the waist" or "the depth of a man";[271] a river the depth "of a thousand men";[272] and cosmic healing "the width of the earth, the length of the river Dānu, the height of the sun."[273] Ritual holes should be dug "one finger" deep in hard earth, but "one span" in soft,[274] or they should be dug up to the "mid-leg" in hard, and "mid-man" in soft earth.[275]

Other sizes include "the thickness of a hair,"[276] arms/wellsprings "thicker than the arms/legs of a horse"[277] stones "the size of a house (*kata*)";[278] a road "the size (i.e., length) of a league";[279] and firewood "the size of up to the ear/a full hand."[280]

Value of services rendered was measured in livestock. For instance, purification of a child cost a lamb, that of a landlord cost a male camel of prime quality, and that of a priest cost the recitation of a *Dahmā āfriti*,[281] which, itself, was in the form of an outstanding rutting camel.[282] The values of silver and gold implements were "as much as the feces of a stallion/male camel."[283]

Quantity of grain was apparently measured by the *danar* (one or two), the meaning of which is uncertain.[284]

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Animals

Wild animals (*datika*) belonged to either the good or the evil creation. In the latter group we find animals that, for various reasons, must have been considered harmful (the *khrafstra*s), including dangerous wild animals; animals that are thought to harm, for example, the crops, such as locusts, flies, and "grain-pulling" ants; lice and insects that eat grains and clothes; and snakes, lizards, frogs, ants, dung beetles, and flies.[285] When the Druj manifests herself, she takes on the shape of a knob-kneed, flat-assed fly.[286] Destroying harmful animals was considered a duty and could be part of atonement for various sins and purification rituals.[287]

Domestic Animals

Harmless (*adyu*) animals (*gao*) included five kinds: in water, on earth, flying, running in the wild (lit. "roaming the wide spaces"), and grazing(?).[288] Among these were the otter and the beaver (female *babrī*) living in the water. The otter was considered particularly beneficent, and harming one was punishable.[289] All good living beings are subsumed in the expression "for the protection of cattle and men [*pasu vīra*], the Aryan lands, and the 'cow' of five kinds [*gao pancahyā*], and for the assistance of the righteous man."

Domestic animals (*pasuka*) were classified as smaller (*pasu*) or larger (*staora*, probably work animals, especially oxen). Among the former were presumably sheep (generic: *anumaya*; specific: masc. *maēsha*, fem. *maēshī*) and goats *(buza, aza*); among the latter, bulls and cows, horses (*aspa*), camels (*ushtra*), and asses (*khara*). Females were characterized as fertile (*azī*) and milk-giving (*daēnu*). These animals came in three categories—lowest, medium, and premier (*nitama, madama, agriya*)—and their relative values were donkey (*kathwa*), bull, horse, camel. Other domestic animals included the pig (*hū persa*) and the wild goat (*schaēni*).[290]

The Dog

The dog played an important role in daily life, both as a farm animal protecting house and sheep and as a participant in religious rituals. In the latter capacity, it also shows up in myths. The dog was made by Ahura Mazdā to protect the livestock and the homestead (V.13.39, 49);[291] in *Videvdad* 19, the *daēnā* who meets the souls after death is accompanied by dogs (*spāna-watī*).

There were several types of dogs, but their Avestan terms do not permit identification with known dogs. *Videvdad* 5 and 13 list dogs that guard the sheep and the town, young dogs, and several others. The hedgehog also counted as "dog."[292] Dogs had a "protector," and hurting or incapacitating sheep- or town-guarding dogs in order to get into the flocks or the towns was a serious sin, while killing them

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caused immense harm to the soul in the beyond.[293] Feeding them bad or hot food was also punishable.[294] On the other hand, dogs that behaved irregularly and harmed animals or humans were to be marked and restrained. Bitches, in particular, must be protected.[295]

In some ways, a dog counted as much as a human; for instance, buried bodies of dogs and humans contaminate the earth equally.[296] In behavior, there were dogs who acted just like eight kinds of people: a priest, a charioteer, a husbandman, a servant, a thief, an informer, a prostitute, and a child.[297]

The dog was used in various cleansing rituals. A yellow dog "with four eyes" (or?) white with yellow ears was led along the path on which dead dogs or humans had been carried in order to chase the Carrion demon, and a dog was released for the same purpose when a person had been contaminated with dead matter.[298]

When a bitch died, her consciousness went into the springs of the water, where two otters were spawned, which in turn spawned a thousand male dogs and a thousand female dogs.[299]

Wild Animals

Among the wild animals, the wolf (*verka*) was the most feared, and the wolf is frequently mentioned together with thieves and robbers as dangerous to domestic animals and people.[300] The term "wolf on two legs" is applied to the *daēwa*-worshipper.[301]

The boar (*varāza*) with sharp fangs and tusks (*tizhi-danstra tizhi-asūra*) is mentioned only as the visible form of several martial deities, and the beaver is mentioned as the animal from whose fur Ardwī Sūrā's coat was made.

Birds

These include the eagle (*erzifya*), whose feathers were used on arrows;[302] the owl (?) (*ashō-zushta*), to whom nails were exhibited before being disposed of;[303] the vulture (*karkāsa*), whose feathers were also used on arrows,[304] and specifically the *zarnumani*, whose sight was observed to be exceptionally good;[305] the rooster (*parō-dars*), who belongs to Sraosha and crows before dawn to rouse the righteous;[306] and the falcon (? *vārgna*), fastest of birds.[307]

Fabulous Animals

In the middle of the Voru-kasha Sea stands the tree of the *saēna* bird (? cf. Persian *sī-morgh*), also called All-Healer, the tree on which Ahura Mazdā placed the seeds of all the plants.[308]

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Also in the Voru-kasha Sea stands the Orderly ass,[309] in Pahlavi called the three-legged ass, which, among other things, purifies the sea of the pollution caused by the Foul Spirit by urinating into it.

The (fish) Vāsī also seems to live in the Voru-kasha Sea,[310] where, according to the Pahlavi texts, apparently, it causes ebb and flow.

In the river Rahā lives the Kara fish, whose sight is good enough to distinguish "a bend of the water of the Rahā (even only) as thick as a hair."[311]

The bird Karshipta "brought the *Daēnā māzdayasni* far and wide" in Yima's enclosure.[312]

Trees and Plants

Few details about growing things are found in the *Avesta*. According to chapter 3 of the *Videvdad*, the third place where the earth is most happy is where the most barley, grass, and food-bearing plants are sown and the ground is made suitable for agriculture.

Of grains there were wheat (*gantuma*)[313] and barley (*yawa*, probably also generic "grain"). Barley was sown (*karshta*), cut (*derta*), threshed (*khwasta*), winnowed (*bata*), and ground (*asha* [from *arta*]).[314] For animals there was hay (*vāstra*). The large seeds of grain were distinguished from the small seeds of hay.[315]

Different types of firewood are enumerated in the *Videvdad*.[316] Other plants included the pomegranate (*hadanaēpata*), which was used in rituals, and the juniper (*hapersi*).[317] Healing plants included the *gao-karna* "cow's ear."[318]

The Sacrifice and Other Rituals

The history of the world in the Avestan myth is structured by the cycle of cosmos and chaos, and specifically by the constant need in the history of the world for living beings to renew the ordered cosmos with sacrifices, until the final sacrifices, by which evil will be undone and permanently banished from the ordered cosmos.

Despite Ahura Mazdā's initial victorious recitation of the *Ahuna variya*, the ordered cosmos periodically lapses into chaos, sickened and destroyed by evil beings in both worlds,[319] during which the two powers in the two worlds fight one another for supremacy. In this combat, all created entities, including gods and humans, but also the earth, waters, plants, have to choose whether to side with the powers of cosmos or chaos.[320]

In this cosmic drama, the principal role in this world is played by the poet-sacrificer, whose ritual recreates the primordial birth and ordering processes and, if successful, reestablishes Ahura Mazdā as ruler of the world,[321] which he then heals.[322]

As Ahura Mazdā's collaborators in the fight between good and evil, men in general and the priests in particular contribute to this fight by performing certain rituals. These rituals conform to the first sacrifices to Ahura Mazdā and the

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Life-giving Immortals by Sraosha in the world of thought[323] and by Zarathustra in the world of the living, who also scorned the evil gods and praised Order, that is, Ahura Mazdā's work.[324] Praise confers fame and also strength and power, while scorn removes fame and strength. The human sacrificer imitates Zarathustra's first sacrifice, as expressed in *Yasna* 8.5–8:

> May you, O Ahura Mazdā, command
> at will and wish your own creations!
> Place at will, O waters, at will, O plants,
> at will, O all good (things) with seed from Order,
> the sustainer of Order in command,
> the one possessed by the Lie out of command!
> May the sustainer of Order have command at will!
> May the one possessed by the Lie not have command at will!
> May he be gone, discomfited, removed
> from the creations of the Life-giving Spirit,
> restrained, with no command at will.
> May I, too, (another) Zarathustra, induce
> those foremost in the houses, towns, tribes, and lands
> to help this *daēnā* along with their thoughts, words, and deeds,
> that of Ahura Mazdā and Zarathustra!
> I invite spaciousness and good breathing space
> for the entire existence of the sustainers of Order.
> I invite constriction and bad breathing space
> for the entire temporal existence of the Lie.

The successful sacrificer is "he who will make the world swell" (*saoshyant*), make it *spanta*, that is, give it new life, "the revitalizer." The term is commonly translated by the Judeo-Christian term "savior," but, like "holy" for *spanta*, "savior" (let alone "messiah") has very different connotations from the Avestan term.

The mythical-ritual framework of the Old and Young Avestan sacrifices is that of an exchange of gifts between gods and humans. During the sacrifice, humans give the gifts that Ahura Mazdā gave them in the beginning back to him as material for him to remake the world. These gifts included humans themselves, their life-force (*ushtāna*) and bones,[325] to give life and form to the newborn world. The expectation of rewards from all divine objects of the sacrifice, male and female, is omnipresent in the Avestan texts and is summed up in the *Yenghyē hātām* prayer:

> Thus, (he) among those that are, in return for whose sacrifice the better (good is to be given, him) Ahura Mazdā knows (to be) according to Order, as well as (the women in return for) whose (sacrifice). To those (men) and those (women) we sacrifice.

The Old Avestan Ritual Myth

In the Old Avestan myth, the sacrifice with its spoken words and ritual refreshments (fat and milk libations) is conveyed to the gods in a ritual chariot race against rivals, in which the sacrificer's breath (*urwan*) carries the words,[326] his tongue is the

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charioteer,[327] and his *daēnā* finds the straight roads and fights the powers of evil along the way.[328] The thrust with which the sacrifice is sent off can be intensified by increasing the numbers of the worshippers.[329] The utterances consist of praise of Ahura Mazdā and scorn for the evil gods.[330]

Once arrived, the competitors are judged by their former peers (*ardra*), and the winner will be admitted to Ahura Mazdā's house as his guest and receive counter-gifts,[331] while the losers, the rival sacrificers, who have chosen crooked paths,[332] will go to the house of the Lie.[333] In return for the successful sacrifice, which has placed Ahura Mazdā back in command and provided him with the elements needed, he is expected to regenerate the true (*hathya*) existence (*ahu*), by filling it with the juices of fertility and life (*frasha*) as a counter gift of matching (or greater) value (*vasnā*).[334]

Young Avestan Rituals

There are several long rituals, as well as many short ones that require less elaborate preparations and execution.

Animal sacrifices were probably common, but are not often mentioned. In the hymn to Haoma, the god complains about the sacrificers who do not give him the portion of the victim that his father, Ahura Mazdā, had assigned to him, namely, a cheek with the tongue and the left eye.

The hymns to the great gods (Mithra, etc.) were recited at festivals in their honor and on other occasions. In these hymns, the sacrifice is addressed to its recipient god by name (*aoxtō-nāmana yasna*, "with a sacrifice in which the name is spoken"), since otherwise it might be appropriated by the wrong gods. These gods also had special rituals devoted to them. For instance, according to the hymn to Mithra, one should sacrifice small and large animals as well as birds to him, and the libations to him should be consumed only after two days of washing the entire body and undergoing rigorous austerities, including ten whiplashes daily for three and two days and nights.[335] The other gods also required animal sacrifices, and the mythical sacrificers are described as sacrificing to them hundreds of stallions, thousands of bulls, and ten thousand sheep.

The two most important long rituals are the *videvdad sade* and the *yasna*. The *videvdad sade* ritual is performed from midnight on, and its purpose is to heal the ailing world of Ahura Mazdā, indeed, the ailing Ahura Mazdā himself.[336] During the *videvdad sade*, a modified *Yasna* with the substitutions of the *Vispered* is recited, and the *Videvdad* is embedded in the *Old Avesta*. The *yasna* is the morning ritual, which regenerates the world and reengenders the heavenly Fire, the sun, son of Ahura Mazdā (see below).

The *vispered* ritual, at which the *Yasna* with the substitutions from the *Vispered* is recited, is performed during the six annual festivals, the *gāhān-bār*s. Hence, the invocations of the seasonal divisions in the *Vispered* are more detailed than in the *Yasna*.

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Other ritual performances include the recital of the five *niyāyishn*s, "requests, invocations (?)" and the five *gāh*s, "times (of the day)." The *niyāyishn*s are hymns to the sun, Mithra, the moon, the waters, and the fire. The *Invocation of the sun*, is recited three times a day, at daybreak, noon, and sunset; *the Invocation of Mithra* at daybreak following the *Invocation of the sun*; the *Invocation of the moon* at the new moon, the full moon, and the last quarter; the *Invocation of the waters* during the day, near water (rivers and wells) and when one sees running water; and the *Invocation of the fire* five times at day and night by the priest who oversees the fire. The *gāh*s are hymns in honor of the five divisions of the day (see below).

There are numerous private rituals that have to do with human life, among them the ritual of tying the sacred girdle, the *kusti* ritual, and the great purification ritual, the *barshnūm* ceremony (see below).

Zoroastrians traditionally wear a white shirt (*vastra* "garment") made from one large piece of woven fabric and a girdle (*abi-yāhana*, the modern *kusti*), a long string, woven on a hand loom in a particularly complex manner. In the later tradition, the shirt is said to symbolize Good Thought (and the sky) and the girdle the Daēnā Māzdayasni (the heavenly *kusti*). The *kusti* is tied several times a day in an elaborate ritual. It is tied for the first time at the age of fifteen (today earlier) in a coming-of-age ceremony, and failure to wear it after that is traditionally a grave sin.

Sacred Formulas

Several short texts are frequently recited during official or personal ceremonies. The most important are the *Yathā ahū variyō* or *Ahuna variya* and the *Āiryamā ishiyō* or *Aryaman ishiya*, the introductory and concluding strophes of the first and fifth *Gāthā*s, respectively; and the *Ashem vohū* and *Yenghyē hātām*, which are short versions of the first and last strophes of the second and fourth *Gāthā*s, respectively (see above). The *Ahuna variya* is about regenerating the royal command for Ahura Mazdā, renewing the ordered world after the model (*ratu*) of Ahura Mazdā's first ordered world (*ahu*), and making him the protector of the poor; the *Ashem vohū* is about the benefit of contributing to the renewal of Ahura Mazdā's Order; the *Yenghyē hātām* is about the rewards for the sacrificer; and the *Aryaman ishiya* expresses the result of the Old Avestan ritual of healing and reordering the world.

These prayers were potent weapons against the powers of evil. Ahura Mazdā recited the *Ahuna variya* against the Dark Spirit in the beginning, before the creation of the world of the living,[337] and Zarathustra recited it to drive the evil gods underground[338] and to heal the world of the living.[339] He also recited the *Ahuna variya* and the *Ashem vohū* against the Dark Spirit to chase him from the earth.[340] In the *Avesta*, one or more *Ashem vohū*s are said before and after most texts, and the *Ahuna variya* is frequently recited in tandem by the two priests (see below); the *Yenghyē hātām* is frequently recited at the end of text sections, notably in the *yasht*s; and the *Aryaman ishiya* is recited in particular against illnesses. Other parts of the *Gāthā*s were cited in various contexts of the *Yasna*, etc.

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The *Dahmā āfriti* approximate literal meaning "the expert invitation"),[341] which takes on the form of a camel,[342] is also uttered for healing.[343]

In *Yasna* 61 and elsewhere, these five prayers are sent up between earth and heaven to dispel the Dark Spirit and other evil beings.

Another commonly recited text is the *Frawarānē*[344] and the related *Jasa mē awanghyē Mazda* ,"Come to my aid, O [Ahura] Mazdā," in which good Mazdayasnians forswear evil and ally themselves with Ahura Mazdā, recited when tying the *kusti* and elsewhere.

The *Yasna* Ritual

This is the morning ritual, whose function is to reproduce the new day after a period of darkness, in fact to reengender the ordered cosmos in the same way Ahura Mazdā engendered the first ordered cosmos with his primordial sacrifice in the world of thought. Its principal elements are (1) the reconstruction and reordering of all the model elements in the worlds of thought (the *ratu*s) and of living beings, beginning with those of limited time, the thirty-three temporal *ratu*s and their associates "surrounding the haoma pressing" (*hāwani*); (2) invocations of the *frawashi*s in their cosmogonic functions and as birth assistants; (3) the rebirth of Zarathustra through the *haoma* ritual in the persona of the sacrificer; (4) the recitation of the *Old Avesta*, featuring Zarathustra, which ends with the banishment of evil and the healing of the world; (5) the journey of the *Gāthā*s (conveyed by the breath-soul and vision-soul of the sacrificer) through the intermediate space, where they combat the powers of darkness; (6) Sraosha's fight with Wrath, the demon of the night sky; (7) invocation of the Fire; (8) libation of the sacrificial waters and invocation of the heavenly waters from which the heavenly Fire is to be reborn; and (9) the final dispersal of the powers of evil, the victory of the powers of light and life, and the birth of the new Order seen visibly in the sunlit sky.

These rituals were performed, as they still are, in sanctified spaces, meticulously proportioned and laid out. The principal ritual objects, which all have divine counterparts, are the fire, water (used for cleansing and for libations, *zaothra*s), and the *barsman* (*barsom*), twigs of a special tree, for which metal twigs are used today. The twigs are tied together by means of a string (*abi-yāha*) made from a date palm leaf. The vegetal kingdom is represented by the plant (*urwarā*), a shoot from a pomegranate tree, and the animal kingdom by the milk (*jīwiyā*, today goat's milk) and the ghee (*gōshudō*, from Av. *gaosh hudāh*, "the cow giving good gifts"). There is also a round bread (*draonah*, modern *darūn*), which represents the earth. The *haoma* branches and the pomegranate twigs are pounded in a mortar and mixed with water, and the juice filtered through a filter, traditionally a net made of hairs from a sacred bull. The juice is mixed with the milk and the mixture (Av. *haoma yō gawa*, "*haoma* with the milk") offered to the divinities and also drunk by the priest. The filtering of the *haoma* takes place immediately before the recitation of the *Old Avesta*. During the ritual, the priests wear a piece of cloth in front of

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their faces (*patidāna*) to prevent pollution from bodily secretions, such as spit, and formerly also had at hand a tool to get rid of inauspicious animals (*khrafstra-gna*).[345]

The *Videvdad Sade* Ritual

This ritual is traditionally performed from midnight to early morning and is succeeded by a *yasna* ritual. Its accompanying text is the *Yasna* with the substitutions of the *Vispered* and the insertions of the *Videvdad*. Aside from the insertion of the *Videvdad* chapters, the principal difference between the text of the *Yasna* proper and the text of the *videvdad sade* ritual is in the ordering of the times of the day. In the *Yasna,* these are ordered so as to begin with the time periods immediately preceding and following dawn, as we would expect from a text that brings about the new day. Thus, in the *Yasna*, the initial *Frawarānē* begins as follows:[346]

> I shall now choose to sacrifice to Ahura Mazdā in the tradition of Zarathustra, discarding the evil old gods (*daēwa*s) and with Ahura Mazdā as my guide (? *tkaēsha*),
> *for the Haoma-pressing Hour, sustainer of Order, a model of Order,*
> for its sacrifice and hymn and satisfaction and glorification,—
> *for the Hour of Life-giving Strength, sustainer of Order…*
> for its sacrifice and hymn and satisfaction and glorification,—

and the list of the daily *ratu*s ends with *Ushahina* and is followed by invocation of the sun and its helpers.

> In the *Videvdad sade*, however, the corresponding text is:
> I shall now choose…as my guide,
> *for the Law and what comes with the Law,*
> *the Law describing how to discard the old gods,*
> *the one spoken by Zarathustra,*
> for its sacrifice…

The law in question is the *Videvdad*, Avestan *dāta vi-daēwa*, which means literally "the Law describing how to discard or keep away the old gods." This is then followed by the praise of Sraosha, the principal fighter of the powers of darkness.

Similarly, in the first litany, the formula "I invite. I gather (the *ratu*s) for (producing) *hāwani*," etc.,[347] is replaced by "I invite. I gather (the *ratu*s) for (producing) the Law," etc., which, in the *Videvdad sade* is followed by the invocation of *Ushahina*, then *Hāwani*.

Thus, while the myth of the *Yasna* is about the rebirth of the sun and restoring the ordered cosmos from chaos by removing the forces of darkness at dawn, the myth of the *Videvdad* is about removing evil from the world of the living and about healing both it and the world of thought throughout the second part of the night.

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Illness, Death, Pollution, and Healing

Death was thought to be caused by the powers of evil. Any place containing dead bodies was a source of pollution, and anything that came in contact with dead matter would be polluted to various degrees. The principal ritual performed to overcome pollution was the *videvdad sade*, in which the *Videvdad* is recited, or rituals described in it, notably the *barshnūm* ceremony (see below).[348] The ritual myth that underlies the *Videvdad* goes from Ahura Mazdā's arrangement of the ordered world of the living to the final healing of the entire cosmos. Within these framing stories, issues of pollution and purification are discussed.

Illness and Healing, Spells and Other Magic

According to chapter 20 of the *Videvdad*, Thrita was the first human to heal the illnesses of the Dark Spirit with Worthy Command, that is, a metal (knife), after which Ahura Mazdā brought forth healing plants, in particular the *gaokarna*.[349] This is followed in chapter 21 by an exhortation to the heavenly bodies, sun, moon, and stars to rise and go along their paths, generating healing and chasing the powers of darkness.

In chapter 22, Ahura Mazdā then tells the story of how, when he had made his beautiful luminous house, the Dark Spirit looked at him and made 99,999 illnesses (*yaska*), after which Ahura Mazdā called upon the Holy Word (*manthra spanta*), to heal him.[350] The Holy Word asks Ahura Mazdā how he is to go about this, and Ahura Mazdā answers by calling upon Narya Sangha, the divine messenger, to go and ask Aryaman to heal him. Narya Sangha does so. Aryaman then quickly goes and fetches sacrificial animals, digs the furrows and the channels needed for the purification ritual, utters the words of exorcism, and so overcomes the illnesses brought on by the Dark Spirit.

This narrative corresponds to the three methods of healing that the ancient Iranians had inherited from their Indo-European past: with knife, plants, and the Holy Word.[351]

Healing by the Holy Word involved reciting exorcising spells in which the illnesses were conjured out of the patient. In these spells, all the known illnesses were named, presumably to make sure that the one from which the patient suffered was among them. The illnesses in these lists to a large extent rhyme or alliterate, and only a few of them can be identified, such as fever (*tafnu*) and the evil eye (*agashi*).

Spells and magic actions were performed also in other circumstances where one might expect attacks by evil powers, specifically, at night, when crossing waters, and at crossroads.[352] In these situations, Ahura Mazdā told Zarathustra, one should recite the holy prayers, especially the Holy Word and the *Ahuna variya*. In the hymn to Verthragna, Ahura Mazdā explains to Zarathustra how to use a feather to ward off evil.[353]

Qualification for healing by the knife, or surgery, is described in chapter 7 of the *Videvdad*: in order for a surgeon to qualify for operating on a Mazdayasnian, he

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should first experiment on a non-Mazdayasnian. If the patient still died at the third attempt, the surgeon was not qualified and would not get a work permit, but if the patient survived three attempts, he became qualified.

Bodily defects, some congenital, were of a different kind, as they were thought to "mark" (*dakhshta*) the individuals as belonging to the Dark Spirit. They included the blind and deaf, hunchbacks, impotent or castrated men, people with irregular teeth, and the leprous, who needed to be secluded, all of whom were excluded from Yima's enclosure (V.2.29).[354] Such people were therefore also excluded from participating in sacrifices to the good gods.[355]

Disposal of Dead Bodies

Three types of disposal of dead bodies are mentioned in the *Avesta*: they can be interred, placed in mounds (*dakhma*), or left in open air. The first two types are censured in the *Videvdad*, where such practices are the second and third to make the earth most unhappy.[356] To make the earth happy, men should dig up such bodies and destroy the mounds, which were inhabited by evil gods, where nightly sacrifices are performed to evil beings, and where illnesses are spawned.[357]

The proper way to dispose of bodies is to leave them in a place where they are the least likely to harm the good creations—water, plants, and living beings[358]—though the earth must patiently tolerate them. They must remain there until animals and carrion birds reduce them to mere bones, leaving the carcass; the water flows over it; and the wind raises the dust.[359]

Bodily Harm and Killing of People and Animals

Punishments for harm done to people vary according to the nature of the damage. For instance, the penalty (*chithā*) for raising a weapon with the intent to harm is on the first occasion five strokes of the horsewhip (*ashtra*) and five with the bastinado (? *sraoshō-caranā*), and on subsequent occasions ten, fifteen, thirty, fifty, etc., of each. The next degree is when the weapon is brought down, then various kinds of blows (an *ardush* blow, a blow that draws blood, one that makes blood flow, one that breaks a bone, and one that renders the victim unconscious). If these deeds are not atoned for, the perpetrators receive two hundred blows with both the horsewhip and the bastinado (V.4).[360]

The most substantial penalty ("penalty for his soul," V.14.2)[361] for harming an animal is for killing an otter, as described in *Videvdad* 14, counted by the highest numbers (10,000) and the largest quantities ("all"), including 10,000 strokes with the horsewhip and 10,000 with the bastinado; 10,000 pieces each of hard and soft firewood, 10,000 spreads of barsom, etc.; the killing of 10,000 each of various harmful animals (snakes, turtles, frogs, ants, lizards, dung beetles, flies, etc.); virtually all material possessions to be given to righteous men, including implements for cutting

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firewood and maintaining the fire; all the tools of priests, warriors, and farmers (including water canals and grounds); houses and furniture; a virgin daughter or sister with her jewelry; sheep and puppies; construction of bridges; and treating righteous men to meat, liquor, or wine.

The heaviest degree of sinfulness is *peshō-tanu*, "he whose body is forfeited," and its maximum penalty two hundred strokes of each kind. This state is said to result, in particular, from the following five transgressions: making someone choose a different belief; giving a dog food it could not eat; harming a pregnant bitch; and having completed intercourse with a menstruating or pregnant woman (V.15.1–8);[362] but also from the cumulative effect of sins that were not paid for. In the world of thought, the demon Wrath is said to be *peshō-tanu* (Yt.10.97).[363]

Pollution

Pollution results from contact with "dead matter," of which there are many kinds. The most obvious are carcasses of humans and animals, but all excretions from the body, as soon as they leave the body, are considered to become infected by the female demon of pollution (*nasush*), among them blood, hair, nails, spilled semen (V.18.46),[364] urine, and feces.

According to chapter 17 of the *Videvdad*, when combing and cutting one's hair and cutting one's nails, one must dispose of the loose hair and nail pairings properly. If disposed of properly, they become weapons against the *daēwa*s; if not, evil things will grow from them.

A special case is that of the person who disposes of corpses for a living, the undertaker. On the one hand, he is completely polluted by the demon of pollution, who attacks the body through its openings, beginning with nose and eyes and ending with the penis and anus (V.3.14);[365] on the other hand, he is doing the community an enormous service. Therefore, when judged after death, what counts is the total of activities other than serving as an undertaker (V.3.21).[366]

Pollution does not occur if a person has no way of knowing that he or she has been in contact with dead matter; in particular, dead matter transmitted by wind, dogs, birds, wolves, or flies does not pollute (V.5.1–7).[367]

Purification Rituals

The principal cleansing agents are water and urine. The urine is usually from a cow or bull (*gaosh maēsman*, Pahlavi *gōmēz*), but urine from people is sometimes used (V.8.13).[368] Both people and objects, for instance, garments (V.7.11–15)[369] and ritual implements, are washed in this manner (V.7.73–75).[370] Occasionally, urine is specified to be from a bull (V.19.21),[371] or water rather than urine is specified (V.8.39).[372]

Washing people means exorcising the demon of pollution, and the procedure follows the order in which it pollutes the body. Thus, when the top of the head is washed, the demon runs to the space between the eyebrows, via the right eye and

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the left eye, etc., and, in the end hides under the sole of the foot in the shape of a fly's wing. Pouring water on the toes finally disposes of her (V.8).[373]

This ritual, today called *barshnūm* from the word for "top of the head," is described in chapter 9 of the *Videvdad*. It takes place in a space demarcated by a complex pattern of furrows dividing it into three areas, in each of which three holes (*maga*) are dug and stepping stones of the hardest kind are placed, to permit the person who is to be purified to move to the holes without stepping on the ground.

Some purification rituals also involve killing harmful animals. For instance, in the case of protracted menstruation, one should kill a "grain-pulling ant" in summer, but two hundred harmful animals in winter (V.15.45).[374]

Menstruation

The menstrual period is divided into three stages characterized by the nature of the menstrual flow, when the woman is "having the signs [*chithra*; having clear flow?], having the marks [? *dakhshta*], and having blood." When she is in a state of impurity, she presents a danger to the good creations (water, fire, the Orderly man) and must be isolated from them in a "quiet place" (V.16).[375] The nature of her place (*gātu*) is not specified in the *Avesta* other than its distance from the good creations. Her period normally lasts eight nights. More than that means that the evil gods are at work, and a purification/exorcism ritual is performed (V.16.10 etc.).[376]

The Study of the *Avesta* in the West

That the "Gabrs" (Persian Zoroastrians) had a sacred book (the *Avesta* [*Vostā*, *Ustā*] and *Zand*) had been known in the West at least since the seventeenth century, but the only Zoroastrian texts to be translated and published were in Persian. Thomas Hyde, for instance, published a translation of the prose *Sad dar* ("a hundred doors" or chapters) in his work on Persian religion in 1700. The *Avesta* itself and some Pahlavi texts were first made known in the West in 1771, when Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil Duperron (Anquetil-Duperron) published a French translation and commentary after a stay in India, where he collected manuscripts and had them explained to him by a local priest. Anquetil's translations were quite inexact by modern standards, but they laid the foundation for future work.

In the nineteenth century, it was proved that Avestan was related to Old Indic and that the *Avesta* was a genuine text, something that had been doubted. The first complete editions of the *Avesta* and its Pahlavi translation and the first grammars appeared between 1852 (N. L. Westergaard, F. Spiegel) and 1867 (F. Justi, Spiegel). The German scholar M. Haug was the first to suggest that only the *Gāthās* were by "Zarathustra himself" (1862).

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Ch. Bartholomae's Avestan dictionary[377] and his translation of the *Gāthās* (1905), "Zarathustra's Sermons," became the basis for philological work on the *Avesta* and the study of Zoroastrianism for most of the twentieth century, but Bartholomae's linguistic analysis, for all its excellence, was still based on an imperfect understanding of the language of the *Gāthās* and was subordinated to his views of Zarathustra and his teachings. It was only in the 1950s that the focus returned to the texts and their language with the work of K. Hoffmann and H. Humbach. To Humbach, the *Gāthās* were not sermons but hymns of praise, and their literary heritage was Indo-Iranian. At the same time, M. Molé maintained the *Gāthās* were ritual texts with a religious function that needed to be analyzed. He suggested that, already in the *Gāthās*, the historical Zarathustra had been transformed into the mythical-ritual prototype, whose sacrifice was aimed at the renovation of the cosmos and with whom every sacrificer identified himself. Molé emphasized the improbability of the traditional construct of Zarathustra as philosopher and reformer preaching a largely mental worship in the first, let alone the second, millennium BCE. After his premature death, Molé's opinions were widely disregarded and refuted by reference to traditional arguments and common opinion.

Among more recent translators of the *Gāthās*, S. Insler subscribed to the traditional view of Zarathustra, while J. Kellens and E. Pirart based their interpretation of the poems on the assumption that most of the text referred to the ritual.

Twentieth-century scholars agreed that the *Gāthās* are extremely obscure, yet argued that they are didactic texts, whose message can be well understood. We know nothing about earlier Iranian religion, yet the *Gāthās* were assumed to express a religious reform, the nature of which was disputed, however. To Bartholomae, it had been monotheism; to W. B. Henning, dualism; to Humbach, Zarathustra's vision of the imminent beginning of the end of the world; to H. Lommel and M. Boyce, the reinterpreting of ancient beliefs at a nobler and subtler level; and to J. Kellens and E. Pirart, it was in the ritual.

On the implicit assumption that the *Gāthās* contain all of Zarathustra's teachings, it was argued that the absence from the *Old Avesta* of Mithra and *haoma* and apparent disparaging references to the *haoma* and the bloody sacrifice expressed the prophet's disapproval. The condemnation of the *haoma* sacrifice was deduced from *Yasna* 32.14 and 48.10, which both contain serious grammatical and lexical problems but clearly refer to the *mis*use of the *haoma*. The abolition of the bloody sacrifice was deduced from *Yasna* 29; *Yasna* 32.14, which refers to the practices of evil people; and *Yasna* 32.8, a passage featuring Yima that Bartholomae, following the Pahlavi tradition, thought referred to Yima's sinful behavior in teaching people to eat meat, but which is incomprehensible. The demotion of the Indo-Iranian *daiwa*s, which is particularly hard to explain historically, was simply ascribed to Zarathustra's reform.

That the portrayal of Zarathustra in the Zoroastrian literature is not that of a historical person is clear from the texts, and he left no trace in the historical record outside of this tradition. Moreover, scholarly disagreements about his time (differing by as much as a millennium) and place, as well as his teachings and the nature of his alleged reform, show that, even if he was historical, his history is no longer to be found in the texts.

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ABBREVIATIONS OF TEXTS

Afr. *Āfrīnagān*
FO. *Frahang ī oīm*
FrD. Fragment Darmesteter (*Le Zend-Avesta* III)
FrN. Fragment in the *Nīrangestān* [D = numbering of Darmesteter, *Le Zend-Avesta* III]
H. *Hādōxt nask* (ed. Haug and West)
Her. *Hērbedestān* (ed. Kotwal et al.)
N. *Nirangestan* (ed. Kotwal et al.)
Ny. *Nyāyišn*
S. *Sī-rōza*
P. *Pursišnīhā*
V. *Videvdad*
Vr. *Vispered*
Y. *Yasna*
Yt. *Yašt*

NOTES

1. Y.32.8, Yt.19.33.
2. Yt.19.77.
3. Cf. Y.44.8, 45.6, 47.3.
4. Y.49.2.
5. Cf. Y.28.5, 43.12.
6. Cf. Y.43.5.
7. Y.30.3.
8. Y.45.2.
9. Y.57.17, Yt.13.76, 15.43
10. Y.72.10, Yt.12.35, Ny.1.1, 8, S.1.30, V.19.35–36
11. V.2.40.
12. *Manahya ahu*, Y.53.6; *manyawā sti*, fragment in V.2.20.
13. Cf. V.22.1.
14. Y.57.21.
15. Yt.10.50.
16. Yt.13.2–10.
17. Cf. Y.31.7, 44.3.
18. Y.29.
19. Yt.13.77.
20. Yt.13.12–16, 53–58, 76–78.
21. Y.37.4, 39.3.
22. Y.48.7.
23. V.19.20, etc.
24. Y. 31.19, 44.3.
25. Y.1.14, etc.

Матеріал, захищений авторським правом

26. Y.32.2.
27. For example, Y.54.1.
28. Cf. the *Ahuna variya.*
29. Yt.17.16.
30. Y.39.2.
31. Y.33.13.
32. Yt.17.16.
33. Yt.10.68.
34. Y.12.9.
35. Yt.13.99–100, 19.85–86, possibly alluded to in Y.53.2.
36. Y.9.26.
37. Y.54.1.
38. V.22.
39. Y.28.5, 33.5.
40. Y.57.10.
41. Y.43.12, 44.16.
42. Cf. Y.9.3, etc.
43. Yt.10.68.
44. Yt.17.
45. Y.9.
46. Y.32.14.
47. Y.17.11, etc.
48. Y.36.2–3.
49. V.19.40.
50. Cf. Y.62.8.
51. Cf. Ny.5.5–6 = S.1.9.
52. Yt.19.46.–50.
53. V.2.
54. Y.62.1–2.
55. Y.16.1–2.
56. Tishtriya Yt.8.50, Mithra Yt.10.1.
57. Yt.5.85.
58. Yt.5.3–4.
59. Yt.5.5.
60. Yt.5.129.
61. Yt.10.2.
62. Yt.10.97.
63. Yt.10.13–15.
64. Yt.8.
65. Yt.8.32–32.
66. Yt.8.8, 54.
67. Y.53.6.
68. Y.55.2.
69. S.1.9.
70. Yt.18.1.
71. Yt.19.10–11.
72. Yt.19.1–8.
73. Yt.6.1.
74. Yt.19.40.

Матеріал, захищений авторським правом

75. Yt.8.34.
76. Yt.13.81.
77. Y.9.26.
78. Y.0.9–10.
79. Y.32.3.
80. Y.30.6.
81. Y.9.8.
82. H.2.15.
83. Yt.13.84.
84. S.1.30., V.19.36.
85. Yt.13.2.
86. Yt.8.12.
87. V.19.42.
88. Y.9.26.
89. Y.44.4.
90. Yt.10.50.
91. Yt.8.32–34.
92. Afr.4.6.
93. V.3.42.
94. Y.1.16, 16.5.
95. Y.42.3, etc.
96. Yt.10.9.
97. S.1.22.
98. Yt.5.120.
99. V.2.22.
100. Y.9.5.
101. V.1.3.
102. Y.32.3.
103. For example, Yt.10.15.
104. Y.11.7.
105. Yt.10.50.
106. Yt.10.13.
107. Yt.5.3.
108. Yt.12.25.
109. Y.0.11.
110. V.3.7.
111. Yt.8.6.
112. Yt.19.66.
113. V.5.15–20.
114. Yt.5.49.
115. Ny.5.5.
116. Yt.5.37.
117. Y.57.29, Yt.10.104.
118. Yt.12.18–19.
119. Yt.14.29.
120. Yt.15.27.
121. Y.60.4.
122. Aog.77.
123. N.64 (D.82).

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124. Y.9.14, Yt.5.17, 9.25, 15.2.
125. Yt.19.66–67.
126. Yt.13.87.
127. Y.30.4.
128. Y.29.
129. Yt.13.87.
130. Yt.13.95.
131. Yt.13.97.
132. Y.31.11.
133. Y.37.3.
134. Y.30.7.
135. For example, Y.34.11. In *Rigveda* 1.166.4, the heavenly spaces are woven through with *tavishī*s, a kind of rods?
136. Y.33.14, 34.14, 37.3, 43.16.
137. Y.55.1.
138. Y.26.4, etc.
139. Y.59.28, etc.
140. Yt.8.54, V.18.19.
141. V.5.21.
142. Yt.13.11.
143. Yt.13.49–52.
144. Yt.13.80–81.
145. Yt.13.84.
146. Y.46.3.
147. Y.0.10, etc.
148. Y.55.2.
149. V.19.29.
150. *Pursishnīhā* 33.
151. V.4.40.
152. V.5.12.
153. V.5.37.
154. V.19.7.
155. Yt.13.46.
156. Yt.13.11.
157. *Videvdad*, chapter 19; *Hā dōkht nask,* chapter 2; *Aogmadaēca*.
158. V.5.8.
159. Y.46.11.
160. Y.30.4, 31.20.
161. Y.46.10.
162. Yt.5.94–95.
163. Yt.14.54–56.
164. V.18.34–58.
165. Yt.17.57–59.
166. Yt.5.92.
167. For example, Y.61.2–4.
168. V.16.14–17.
169. V.8.32.
170. V.18.62, 69.
171. V.15.13–14.

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172. Y.32.15.
173. Y.53.2.
174. For example, Y.46.1 and commonly in the *Young Avesta*.
175. Yt.5, 9, 15, 17, 19.
176. Yt.13.87.
177. Yt.13.130–142.
178. Y.32.8, Yt.19.33.
179. Yt.19.77.
180. Yt.19.26.
181. Yt.15.11–12, 19.27–29.
182. V.2.
183. Y.32.8.
184. Yt.19.30–34.
185. Yt.13.143.
186. Yt.5.61–63.
187. *Pursishnīhā* 52.
188. Y.9.11.
189. Yt.19.41.
190. Yt.13.99, 19.85.
191. V.21.5.
192. Yt.5.132.
193. Yt.13.139.
194. FrD.4.
195. Yt.13.87–89.
196. Y.2.13, etc.
197. Yt.5.1, 10.119, etc.
198. Yt.13.89.
199. Y.9.1, 14.
200. Y.29.
201. Y.9.14–15, Yt.19.80–81.
202. Yt.17.19–20.
203. V.19.
204. Yt.13.62, 19.66.
205. Yt.13.128–129.
206. Yt.19.11–12, 92–96.
207. Y.31, etc.
208. Yt.10.2.
209. Yt.10.116–117.
210. V.3.2–3.
211. Y.9.5.
212. Yt.8.13–14.
213. V.14.15.
214. Y.19.17.
215. Y.32.1, 33.3, 33.4, 49.7.
216. Y.46.1.
217. Yt.10.89.
218. Y.59.30.
219. Y.50.6.
220. N.54–59 (D.72–77).

Матеріал, захищений авторським правом

221. N.60–65 (D.78–83).
222. N.47.19 (D.65).
223. N.27 (D.45).
224. V.18.1–6.
225. Yt.14.62.
226. Yt.13.39.
227. Yt.5.131.
228. V.14.9, etc.
229. Yt.10.125.
230. V.3.25.
231. Yt.8.29.
232. Yt.10.14.
233. Y.32.10.
234. Yt.8.54.
235. V.14.10.
236. V.19.21.
237. V.18.14–16.
238. V.3.32.
239. V.14.17.
240. V.7.14–15.
241. Yt.5.126.
242. V.7.74–75.
243. Yt.8.18.
244. Yt.10.112.
245. Yt.14.27.
246. Yt.15.57.
247. Yt.15.57, 17.10.
248. Yt.5.127–128, 17.10.
249. Yt.10.28.
250. Y.57.21, Yt.10.28.
251. Yt.5.101, Yt.13.26, V.2.26.
252. Yt.5.101, V.2.30.
253. V.2.31–32.
254. Yt.10.14.
255. Yt.13.26.
256. Yt.13.141–142.
257. Y.48.5.
258. V.15.13–14.
259. V.14.15.
260. Y.53.4.
261. V.8.13.
262. Y.12.9.
263. Yt.15.12.
264. For example, Vr.1.2–3.
265. V.6.12.
266. V.7.29–30.
267. V.8.76.
268. FrN.86 (D.103).
269. V.18.11.

Матеріал, захищений авторським правом

270. V.14.12.
271. V.6.27.
272. Yt.14.29.
273. Y.60.4.
274. V.17.5.
275. V.8.8.
276. Yt.14.29.
277. Yt.5.7, Yt.8.5.
278. Yt.17.20, V.19.4.
279. Yt.8.23, V.2.26.
280. Afr.3.5.
281. V.9.37.
282. P.31.
283. V.14.11.
284. V.16.7.
285. V.14.5–6, 16.12, 17.3.
286. V.7.2.
287. For example, V.13.7, 14.5–6, 15.45.
288. For example, Y. 39.1–2, 71.9, Yt.13.74.
289. V.14.
290. FrN.40 (D.58).
291. V.13.39, 49.
292. V.13.2–3.
293. V.13.
294. V.13, 15.
295. V.15.
296. V.3.
297. V.13.44–48.
298. V.8.16–18.
299. V.13.50–51.
300. Y.9.21, V.13.10.
301. Fragment in V.7.52.4.
302. Yt.10.39.
303. V.17.9.
304. Yt.10.129.
305. Yt.14.33.
306. V.18.15.
307. Yt.14.19.
308. Yt.12.17.
309. Y.42.4.
310. Y.42.4.
311. Yt.14.29.
312. V.2.42.
313. N.10 (D.28).
314. V.7.35.
315. Yt.8.29.
316. For example, V.8.2.
317. Yt.14.55.
318. V.20.4.

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319. Cf. Y.30.6, 45.1, 46.11.
320. Y.12.7.
321. Y.8.5–6.
322. Y.8.5–6.
323. Y.31.10.
324. Y.57.2.
325. Yt.13.89, 17.18.
326. Y.0.5, 37.3.
327. Cf. Y.28.4.
328. Y.50.6.
329. Y.33.1, Y.12.9.
330. Y.34.1.
331. Y.35.2, 41.5, 50.11.
332. Y.31.22.
333. Y.33.1.
334. Y.46.11, 49.11.
335. Y.34.15, 46.19, 50.11.
336. Yt.10.119, 122.
337. V.22.2.
338. Y.19.1–4.
339. Y.9.14–15.
340. V.19.10.
341. Yt.17.20.
342. Y.62.2–7.
343. P.31
344. V.22.5.
345. Y.12.
346. V.14.8, etc.
347. Y.0.7.
348. Y.1.3.
349. V.9.
350. V.20.3–4.
351. V.22.2.
352. V.7.44.
353. Yt.11.4.
354. Yt.14.35.
355. V.2.29.
356. Yt.5.92–93, 17.54.
357. V.3.8–9.
358. V.3.12, V.7.53–57.
359. V.3.15–16.
360. V.5.12.

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http://avesta.org/ contains the translations in the *Sacred Books of the East* and others, many outdated, as well as literature on rituals.

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CHAPTER 4

THE ACHAEMENID PERSIAN EMPIRE (550–330 BCE)

A. SHAPOUR SHAHBAZI

THE Persian Empire was created in the middle of the sixth century BCE by a southern Iranian people called Pars or Persians. It introduced a number of political, economic, artistic, military, and legal ideas and institutions, which functioned admirably for two hundred and twenty years and, despite the disruption caused by the Macedonian conquest, profoundly influenced later cultures, becoming models or foundations for those of the Hellenistic, Parthian, Sasanian, and Islamic states.

The characteristics of the Persian state were strict adherence to the rule of law, religious and cultural tolerance, and appreciation of the achievements and skills of every subject people. As a result, the Persians became the inheritors and guardians of the ancient Near Eastern civilizations, and "Persian art" became the pinnacle of the collective art of those cultures, creating magnificent palaces in various capitals of the empire. Nationally, this role was so vital to the formation of the identity of Iranians that they all came to be called "Persians" and their land "Persia" by their foreign contemporaries, erroneous designations that survive in the parlance of Westerners and some other non-Iranians to this day. Universally, the Persian state was the first "world empire," because, as Persian kings repeatedly remind us in their inscriptions, it contained "many people and many languages," who enjoyed legal and cultural autonomy, much as did the subjects of the Ottoman and British empires.

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Sources

Information on the Persian Empire comes from four sources of varying authenticity. The most valuable category consists of direct Iranian evidence. Unlike ancient Near Eastern people, the Persians did not write historical accounts and preferred oral narratives. Consequently, we have no direct historical account composed by the Persians themselves. The sole exception is Darius the Great's Bisotun inscription, and even this record merely chronicles the events of the first three years of his reign. However, we do have royal proclamations written in Neo-Babylonian, Neo-Elamite, and Old Persian cuneiform scripts or in Egyptian hieroglyphics, Aramaic, and Greek, as well as archival documents, such as the Aramaic letters from the Jewish colony of Elephantine in southern Egypt and those of Arshama, prince-governor of Egypt, and the economic and administrative records of the "Persepolis Treasury Tablets" and the "Persepolis Fortification Tablets" in Neo-Elamite. Other items in the category of direct Iranian sources include architectural evidence (palaces and other ruins, especially those of Persepolis, Susa, Pasargadae, Memphis, and Sardis) and artifacts such as royal and provincial coins, seals and seal impressions, and metal works (most notably the Treasure of the Oxus now in the British Museum).

"Classical," or Greco-Roman, texts constitute the second category of sources. Of these, the most valuable is the *Histories* of Herodotus (mid-fifth century BCE), which provides a detailed contemporary account of the formation and institutions of the Persian Empire as the prolegomena to his (naturally Hellenocentric) narrative of the Greco-Persian Wars of 490–479 BCE. Wherever his evidence parallels existing Iranian sources, his authenticity and fairness are borne out. Next are the works of the early fourth-century BCE Athenian soldier and philosopher Xenophon, who chronicled Greco-Persian relations during the late fifth and early fourth centuries in his *Anabasis* and *Hellenica*, and also wrote a romantic account (the first "historical romance") of Cyrus the Great, which although largely unhistorical preserves valuable information on Persian rites, customs, costumes, and education. The epitomes of *Persica* by Ctesias, the Greek doctor at the Persian court, written in about 390 BCE as a refutation of Herodotan accounts, is worthless for the earlier period but valuable for the later fifth and early fourth centuries. The accounts by Alexander historians (Arrian, Diodorus Siculus, Justin, Strabo, and Plutarch) are indispensable for the military and cultural history of the fourth-century Persian Empire. Plutarch further offers a valuable account in his *Life of Artaxerxes* (II), while Athenaeus has collected a great number of testimonies on the cultural aspects of the Iranians.

The third category of information consists of the Bible and other religious or astronomical texts bearing evidence on certain aspects of relations with the Persians. The Bible in particular preserves several Persian documents relating to the freedom granted to the exiled Jews and the Persian religious policy as a whole. The Egyptian texts contain similar evidence with regard to Egyptian laws and traditions. And the Babylonian astronomical texts throw much light on the calendar and chronology of the period.

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Political History

By the late second millennium BCE, groups of the eastern branch of the Indo-Europeans, which called itself *Airya* ("noble," cf. Greek *aristos*, "best in birth and rank," the root of the word *aristocracy*), had settled in the regions between the Jaxartes-Oxus basin, the Hindu Kush mountains, Hamun Lake, and the Alburz chains. The Aryan tribes included the Medes (ancestors of many Iranians, particularly the Kurds), Persians, Hyrcanians, Parthians, Choresmians, Scythians, Sogdians, Bactrians, Drangians, Heratians, Arachosians, Gandharans, and Sattagydians. Although geographical separation brought about religious and linguistic distinctions, they all were conscious of their ethnic affinity, and ultimately gave their name to their new home, *Iran* (from *Airyanām*, genitive plural adjective of *Airya-*), "the [land of the] Aryans," while retaining their individual names for regions they settled. Thus, western Iran became Media and southern Iran Pārsa/Persia. The latter region was heavily influenced by the Elamites. Consequently, the Persians learned a good deal of Elamite culture, especially in administration and arts.

From the middle of the eighth century BCE, when Assyrian invasions into the Zagros region intensified, newly settled Iranian tribes began to form local states, each led by a band of noble warriors around a chief. The Medes elected a trusted and tested chieftain, Deioces, as their king, and from their capital at Ecbatana/Hamadan they went on to create a state that incorporated the Persians and much of modern Iran. Similarly, the Persians gathered around the banner of Achaemenes (Old Persian Hakhamanish), who became the eponymous founder of the Persian royal family, the Achaemenids. His son and successor Teispis (Old Persian Chishpish) seems to have divided his realm between two sons, giving the area of Anshan to Cyrus I (Old Persian Kurush) and the eastern portion to Ariaramnes. By 640 BCE, Assyria had vanquished Elam and forced many neighboring petty rulers, including Cyrus I, to pay tribute. Shortly afterwards, the Medes rose to military ascendancy, and under their leader Cyaxares they formed regular armies, made an alliance with Babylonia, and succeeded in destroying the dreaded Assyrian power. They thus emerged as one of the six major powers of the sixth century, along with Babylonia, Egypt, Lydia, Bactria, and Scythia. Cyaxares assumed the title "king of kings" with justification; survived an invasion of Iran by his northern relatives, the Scythians of the Caucasus and Central Asia; and, finally, warred with Lydia, the rising empire in Anatolia. His son, Astyages, married his only child, princess Mandana, to the "king of the Persians," Cambyses I (Old Persian Kambujiya), son of Cyrus I. The marriage produced Cyrus II, the Great, who was thus the heir to both the Median and Persian thrones. In 550 BCE, Cyrus rose up against his despotic grandfather and overthrew him. From a contemporary document known as the Nabunaid Chronicle and the testimony of Herodotus we learn that, dissatisfied with Astyages, the Median aristocracy, led by a military commander named Harpagus, joined Cyrus and accepted him as the legitimate heir to the throne. This established the Achaemenid—or the first Persian—Empire, in which the Medes shared the status of ruling people with

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the Persians, so much so indeed that the Greeks frequently called the Persians "Medes" and coined the term "Medizing" to denote "pro-Persian policy" or "Persian partisan."

Cyrus opened a new phase in the military and political history of the Iranians and their neighbors. To understand his actions, one needs only to glance at the map of Western Asia. Iran's geography bound it to Central Asia and the western Indus Valley on the one hand and to the Caucasus, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia on the other hand. Every ethnic and cultural movement in these regions affected the life of the inhabitants of the Iranian Plateau. In Mesopotamia and Egypt, and to a certain extent in Anatolia and Bactria, major rivers and concentrations of population had led to early cultural advancements and unified urbanism in the form of centralized states. But in Iran, lack of large rivers and the presence of numerous mountains favored regionalism, and tribes rather than cities dominated the various settlements on the Iranian Plateau. Only the Elamites of the southwestern lowland had from an early time developed a centralized state. And although they extended their cultural influence over the entire plateau, they had always to contest the military ambitions of Babylonians or Assyrians, who regularly invaded the Zagros region, and eventually eclipsed the Elamite state by 640 BCE. Cyrus recognized that he had neither the time nor enough Iranians to create a world empire from scratch. If such a state was to develop on the Iranian Plateau, it had to incorporate the urbanized neighbors to the west and the nomadic centers to the east and north.

Accordingly, after overthrowing his grandfather and establishing himself as the chosen ruler of the Medes and Persians, Cyrus embarked on a major plan of conquest aimed at dominating the region stretching from the Oxus-Jaxartes basin and the Indus to the Mediterranean and the Nile. He did not need to find pretexts to start this plan. Croesus of Lydia, brother-in-law of Astyages, challenged Cyrus's new position while Jews exiled to Babylonia, and even Babylonians dissatisfied with the religious policy of Nabunaid (Nabonidus), eagerly awaited Cyrus's conflict with Babylonia and engaged in a pro-Persian propaganda campaign. Croesus created a grand alliance of Lydia, East Greeks (Ionians), Sparta, Egypt, and Babylonia against Cyrus, but before his allies could gather (only some East Greeks were with him) he marched eastwards and encamped at Pteria (near Boghazköy), hoping that the coming winter would prevent Cyrus from launching an offensive. Cyrus, however, marched upland, and having annexed northern Mesopotamia and received the voluntary submission of Cilicia (which retained its native dynasts), Armenia, and Cappadocia, he engaged Croesus in an inconclusive battle, whereupon the Lydian fled to his capital, Sardis. Despite the winter, Cyrus gave chase and took Sardis after a fourteen-day siege (547 BCE). Croesus was captured but treated honorably; he remained a royal "guest" at the court of Cyrus and his successor Cambyses II (accounts of his suicide or murder are unfounded). Sardis became the western capital of the Persian Empire, and many Lydian and Ionian artisans were employed by Cyrus to work on buildings at Pasargadae, his capital in the heart of Persia. Then Cyrus returned home and embarked on an eastern campaign, which resulted in the incorporation of Hyrcania, Parthia, Carmania, Drangiana (Seistan), Aria (Herat), Sattagydia, Gandhara, Bactria,

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Choresmia, and Sogdia. He also appears to have subjugated some Scythian tribes (a "Scythia" was inherited by his successors). In the meantime, his Median generals, Mazares and Harpagus, subjugated all of western Asia Minor by force or persuasion. By 540 BCE, Cyrus was ready to move against Babylonia.

Babylonia was in a difficult situation. King Nabunaid (Nabonidus) was of northern Mesopotamian origin and was therefore viewed as an outsider who left Babylon for long periods of time. He paid fanatical devotion to Sin, the moon god of Harran, but neglected the cult of Marduk, the national god, to the point that at times he did not even go to the god's Esagila temple to lead the New Year procession. Furthermore, dissatisfactions ran deep among many overburdened subjects and descendants of forcefully transplanted peoples, such as the exiled Jews. Everywhere the arrival of a savior was expected. A Babylonian document known as the Cyrus Cylinder records that "Bel-Marduk cast his eye over all countries, seeking for a righteous ruler . . . Then he called by name Cyrus, King of Anshan, and pronounced him ruler of the lands."[1] The general expectation is more fully recorded in the Bible. The prophet Isaiah (40–44) praised the coming of Cyrus not as an ordinary conqueror but as a messiah, a deliverer anointed by God:

> I [Yahweh] stirred up one from the north, and he has come, from the rising sun, and he shall call on my name; he shall trample on rulers.[2]

In another passage, an extraordinary place of honor and divine mission is allotted to Cyrus:

> That said [Yahweh] of Cyrus,
> He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasures,
> Even saying to Jerusalem: 'Thou shalt be built';
> And to the Temple 'Thy foundation shall be laid'.
> Thus says Yahweh to His Messiah, to Cyrus,
> Whose right hand I have grasped,
> To subdue nations before him,
> And ungird the loins of kings,
> To open doors before him,
> That gates may not be closed,
> I will go before thee,
> And make the crooked places straight
> I will break in pieces the gates of brass
> And cut in sunder the bars of iron,
> And I will give thee the treasures of darkness,
> And hidden riches of secret places.[3]

That Cyrus was looked upon by many people as a deliverer is borne out by his actions in Babylonia. In a brilliant strategic move, Cyrus outflanked the Babylonian army and then defeated it decisively at Opis on the Tigris in July 530 BCE, and his troops captured Babylon in October. He himself entered the city on October 29, and

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was welcomed as a deliverer anointed by Marduk: "Green twigs were spread on his path by joyful inhabitants." Nabunaid was captured but treated honorably (he was given a fief in Carmania), and the peoples rejoiced. Cyrus presented himself as a legitimate successor to Assurbanipal and Nebuchadnezzar to pacify the fiercely proud Mesopotamians, sent greetings to all Babylonians, released all the exiles and enslaved peoples, and sent back the gods of different peoples that Mesopotamian kings had seized and brought to Babylonia. He even embarked on restoring ruined gates, temples, and city quarters. A Babylonian document (the "Verse Account of Nabunaid") describes the mood of the conquered people:

> [To the inhabitants of] Babylon a heart is given now;
> [They are like prisoners when] the prisons are opened;
> [Liberty is restored to] those who were surrounded by oppression;
> [All rejoice] to look upon him as king.[4]

Cyrus himself recorded his peaceful and disciplined occupation of Babylon in the Cyrus Cylinder, a proclamation he issued in Babylonian language and cuneiform script, which some have tried to characterize as a propaganda device patterned after Assyrian and Babylonian royal decrees. However, unlike earlier temple documents, which were hidden underneath a wall or in a safe with no practical purpose or effect, this one *published* a new policy, that of religious and cultural tolerance, for everyone to benefit from and for the Persian authorities to *directly put into practice.* It is therefore a truly significant historical charter.

The fall of Babylon was followed by the incorporation of Phoenicia and Palestine into the empire. In the meantime, Cyrus built a capital in his homeland and called it Pasargadae, after the name of his own royal clan. The remains of this center lie 135 km to the northeast of Shiraz. There was now only one major antagonist to deal with: Egypt, which under Amasis II had risen to military power with the help of Greek mercenaries and had formed an alliance with Lydia against Cyrus. But Cyrus had to make a punitive expedition against his nomadic cousins, the Scythians of Central Asia, who threatened his northeastern provinces; he died fighting them, and the task of conquering Egypt was left to his eldest son and successor, Cambyses II.

Cyrus ushered a new age by determining the characteristics of the Persian Empire: strict adherence to the rule of the law, religious and cultural tolerance, and appreciation of the achievements and skills of every subject people. He thus left a widely cherished memory. The Iranians called him "Father," the Greeks "Fortunate and Befriended by Gods," the Jews "Yahweh's Messiah," and the Babylonians "Anointed by Marduk."

Cambyses did not possess the wisdom and self-control of his father. Fearing that his only brother, Bardiya (Smerdis), a valiant prince much loved by the people, would seize power in his absence, Cambyses had him secretly murdered, and then—having appointed a trusted official, a Median nobleman of the tribe of the Magi (not a priest) by the name of Oropastes (*Ahura-upaštu*, "He who has Ahura Mazdā's protection") as the Steward of his House (i.e., viceroy of the empire), rendered by

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Herodotus as Patizeithes (Old Iranian **Patikhshayathiya* and given as the *name* of the official)—he marched against Egypt (525 BCE). Amasis had died, and his young son Psamtikos III was defeated and captured by Cambyses, who had him executed after discovering a murderous conspiracy by him. The Persians also conquered Libya and part of Ethiopia, but lost a part of their army in Egypt during a sandstorm. The loss, and the long absence of the king (who had remained childless) and the army from Iran, provided the opportunity for the man he had left at home in charge of his household to usurp his throne. As Oropastes himself was not an Achaemenid prince, and as the legitimate heir, Bardiya, had been secretly murdered, the Median steward placed his own brother, Gaumata, upon the throne, pretending that he was Bardiya, the son of Cyrus. Only a few trusted people knew of this, and Gaumata hid himself in a remote Median castle so that he would not be recognized. Indeed, he began murdering those who knew the fate of the true Bardiya, and also exempted the populace from taxation for three years, a cunning move of an unlawful ruler who sought popularity and at the same time the destruction of the financial resources of the Persian Empire. When a herald told Cambyses and his men of the event, the king hurried home to punish the usurper, but death forestalled him. On his deathbed, Cambyses charged Achaemenid princes, notably Darius (Old Persian Darayavahush)—son of Hystaspes and grandson of Arsames, who was the king's "Spearbearer"—and other Persian magnates to finish the task and restore the Achaemenid throne. Six of these magnates, led by Darius, managed to enter the Median castle and execute the usurpers (September 522 BCE), whereupon Darius became king (the view that Gaumata was the true Bardiya and Darius a regicide usurper who pretended to be a relative of Cyrus is a fantasy of revisionist historians fond of sensationalism). During the upheaval, a number of provinces of the Persian Empire had rebelled and opted for particularism and independence. Darius resolutely quelled the revolts, and recorded their details in his trilingual inscription (Babylonian, Elamite, and Old Persian) on the rock of Bisotun, which also bears the representation of Darius and two of his "helpers" triumphing over the nine rebel "kings." In 519 BCE, Darius campaigned in Central Asia against the "pointed-hat" Scythians who were in revolt and resubjugated them, bringing back their captured king Skunkha. He then added a fifth column in Old Persian to the Bisotun inscription to record the event and had Skunkha pictured on the rock along with the rebel kings.

In his first years, Darius created a real imperial state, with a government based not merely on the virtuous behavior and intellectual ability of a single person but on an army, on sound bureaucracy, and on officials loyal to the throne rather than to their own regions. He knew that an empire flourished only when it possessed a professional military and sound financial and legal systems. So he reorganized the Persian Empire, setting it on a firm basis and consolidating its economy and military. He also provided it with sets of law codes, a royal currency, and a national script (Old Persian cuneiform), and extended its borders by annexing some areas of the Indus Valley, in Transoxiana, and northwest of the Black Sea. He constructed many buildings at Susa, Persepolis, and other capitals, and left a large number of official records in the various languages of his realm. Only some of these measures can be detailed here.

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Herodotus records[5] the profound interest Darius showed in geographical explorations. Wishing to know more about the Indus delta and the possibility of creating a sea route between India, Persia, and the Mediterranean region, "he sent a number of men on whose truthfulness he could rely, including Scylax of Caryanda," to sail down the river from southeastern Afghanistan and explore its basin and western sea routes. "After a voyage of thirty months," they reached the Red Sea near modern Zagazig. "Then Darius conquered the Indians and made use of the sea in those parts." In fact, he traveled to Egypt, and ordered that the Red Sea be linked with the Nile. A canal was dug running from the present-day Zagazig through the Wadi Tumilat and down the Bitter Lake near Suez. Herodotus reports that "the length of it is four days' journey, and the width such as to admit of two triremes being rowed along it abreast."[6] The king commemorated the event by setting up a stela bearing his name, words, and image. One inscription in Old Persian opens with the praise of Ahura Mazdā and the name and titles of Darius, and then records:

> Proclaims Darius the King: I am a Persian. From Persia I seized Egypt. I gave order to dig this canal from a river by name Nile, which flows in Egypt, to the sea that goes from Persia. Thereupon this canal was dug exactly as I had ordered and ships went from Egypt through this canal to Persia, as I had desired.

A major event of Darius' reign was his European expedition. Ukraine and South Russia were the home of north Iranian tribes collectively called Saka (Scythians). Some of them had invaded Media,[7] others had slain Cyrus,[8] and certain groups had revolted against Darius when he ascended the throne. As long as they remained hostile, Iranian lands were in constant danger of their onslaught, and the trade between Central Asia and the Black Sea shores was in peril. Scythia's geography was vaguely known, and a campaign through the Balkans and Ukraine to demonstrate Persian power seemed feasible. Having sent a naval reconnaissance to explore the shores of the Black Sea, Darius crossed into Europe (in about 513) over a pontoon bridge built by his Samian engineer, Mandrocles (a feat not rivaled until 1973), which continued the royal road into Europe. Then he moved northward to the mouth of the Danube, above which his fleet, led by Ionians, had bridged the river,[9] and crossed into Scythia pursuing the Scythians, who evidently avoided direct engagement in battle and laid waste to the land while retreating inwards. Having marched eastward for a month, Darius reached a desert, where he began building eight frontier forts. But as the Scythians kept harassing his troops and the winter was approaching, Darius thought it prudent to withdraw via the Danube Bridge. Shortly after, his commander Megabyzus reduced gold-rich Thrace and several Greek cities of the north Aegean, while Macedonia submitted voluntarily. In the meantime, Aryandes, satrap of Egypt, annexed Cyrene (Libya).[10]

Another major chapter of Darius's reign involves his relations with the Greeks. By 510 BCE, Asiatic Greeks and many islanders had accepted Persian rule and were governed by tyrants responsible to Darius. There were also pro-Persian parties, the

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"Medizing Greeks," in Greece itself, especially at Athens.[11] Darius encouraged these tendencies, and opened his court and treasuries to those Hellenes who wanted to serve him as soldiers, artisans, marines, and statesmen. But Greek fear of the growing might of Persia and Persian annoyance at Greek interference in Ionia and Lydia led to a major conflict. In 500 BCE, the deposed oligarch of Naxos appealed to Artaphernes, brother of Darius and satrap of Lydia, to restore him. In retaliation, Aristagoras, tyrant of Miletus, began to organize the "Ionian revolt." Eretria and Athens helped him by sending ships to Ionia and leading a march on Sardis, which they burned. Thereupon military and naval operations continued for six years and ended with Persian reoccupation of all Ionian and Greek islands. Artaphernes showed prudent statesmanship and reorganized Ionia politically and financially. However, as anti-Persian parties gained ascendancy in Athens and pro-Persian aristocrats were exiled from there and Sparta, Darius retaliated by sending a navy and army across the Hellespont under his son-in-law, Mardonius. When he failed because of a violent storm and harassment by Thracians, a second expeditionary force (of about 20,000) under Datis the Mede captured Eretria and, guided by Hippias, the exiled tyrant of Athens, landed in late summer 490 at Marathon in Attica, where it was defeated by 9,000 heavily armed Athenian infantry (supported by 600 Plataeans and some 10,000 lightly armed "attendants") under Miltiades.

Meanwhile, Darius was occupied with his constructions in Persepolis, Susa, Egypt, and elsewhere. A major project was his linking of the Nile to the Red Sea via a "Suez Canal" (see above), and another was the construction of a rock-cut tomb in Naqsh-e Rostam near Persepolis for himself and his immediate family. Following Marathon, Darius decided to invade Greece in person and punish the enemy, but his declining health and a rebellion in Egypt aborted the plan. He died in November 486 and was entombed in his rock-cut sepulcher. He had already designated as successor Xerxes (Old Persian Khshayarsha), his eldest son by Queen Atossa, daughter of Cyrus the Great.

Xerxes first subdued Egypt and installed his full brother Achaemenes as its satrap. He then faced a revolt in Babylonia, which he put down with harsh measures even though he himself was becoming more and more Babylonianized (several of his wives were Babylonian). In an Old Persian inscription, he tells us that when he ascended the throne he enforced the worship of Ahura Mazdā upon the inhabitants of an unspecified region who worshiped false gods (*daiva*s). This seem to be a change in the policy of religious toleration, but there are no other instances, and it appears that he had merely restored the cult of Ahura Mazdā in a place where ancient divinities rejected by Zarathustra had again been become legitimate objects of veneration.

Xerxes was a man of magnanimity, artistic talent, and appreciation of beauty, especially fine architecture. He tried to avert a great war with Greece, but his father's generals, headed by his cousin Mardonius, accused him of timidity and forced his hand to carry out the punitive expedition Darius had planned against Greece. Three years were spent in collecting a vast army and a formidable navy from different parts of the empire. Herodotus gives a vivid account of these forces, detailing each

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nation's contribution and national costume and armament. But his figures (and those of the Greek authors in general) are vastly exaggerated. The army was organized on a decimal system, and since Herodotus names six corps commanders, it seems to have consisted of six corps of 10,000 each, all infantrymen. To this must be added the elite royal guard; the "Immortals," also numbering 10,000 foot soldiers; and some 10,000 horsemen. The modern estimate is thus 80,000 fighting men, still a very large army for that age. The navy is estimated to have had 600 fighting ships, of a type older and more cumbersome than the new, sturdier ships of the Greeks prepared by the Athenian leader Themistocles. Each trireme had a complement of 170 oarsmen together with some 30 fighting men on board. The army marched from Sardis to the northwest corner of Asia Minor and crossed into Europe on a pontoon bridge especially constructed over the Hellespont for the purpose. The Greeks had meanwhile put aside their chronic disunity and gathered all the forces they could, something around 40,000 heavily armed and armored trained foot soldiers, or hoplites, and a much larger number of lightly armed troops, under the leadership of Athens and Sparta, to resist the invaders. They had readied a strong navy with a personnel of over 65,000 to counter the royal navy at key places. They chose to stop Xerxes at the narrow pass of Thermopylae and meet his fleet at nearby Artemisium. Xerxes' plan was to reach northern Greece, then turn southward along the coast and take Athens and the Peloponnese, while the navy was instructed to sail parallel to the march route and supply and support the army. Fully two-thirds of the Greeks were on the Persian side, and among them was Demaratus, the former king of Sparta, who hoped to be reinstalled as a royal satrap over his homeland by Xerxes.

The expedition saw three major engagements. At Thermopylae the Persians met Spartan hoplites and turned the pass, trapping and killing 300 of them (an event which the Greeks subsequently developed into a heroic tale of "Leonidas' Last Stand"), and then they advanced toward Athens. The town had been abandoned, and the Greek navy had taken up position (under Themistocles) at the narrow straits of Salamis Island opposite Athens. There a battle was joined in which the Greeks drew the Persian fleet into narrow waters and smashed a large number of them, while others were damaged by chaotic attempts to advance or withdraw (480 BCE). Xerxes then turned the best of his fighting force over to Mardonius and left for Sardis. Mardonius marched upward and met a large force of Athenian and Spartans, lead by King Pausanias of Sparta, on the Plataea plain (479 BCE). He was killed and his army vanquished. The Persian invasion had failed and no other was ever attempted. Worse still, the Greeks went on the offensive and captured large parts of Persian territories in the Aegean and western Asia Minor, amassing huge sums of money from loot and from the ransom and sale of captured persons. Interestingly, Persia still appealed to the Greek leaders; Pausanias was captured when he was on his way to Xerxes' court to become his vassal, and Themistocles actually made it there and became a Persian satrap. The Greeks soon fell into disunity as Athens and Sparta vied for supremacy over other city-states and went on exacting a yearly sum from their "allies" in the name of common "defense" against Persia. Eventually, political rivalry led to open military hostility (431 BCE), and this provided Persia the

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opportunity of interfering in Greek affairs, alternately helping the Spartans and the Athenians. Thirty years after Plataea, the Persians had their revenge when Athens was taken and sacked by a Spartan force supplied by Persian gold.

Following his return, Xerxes spent his time in building activities, completing palaces started by his father and constructing new ones. In 466 he was assassinated in a palace conspiracy, which caused a civil war. At last his youngest son, Artaxerxes I, emerged as the unchallenged ruler and reigned for forty years "with mildness and magnanimity."[12] He spent a good deal of his time in building palaces. His satrap Megabyxos put down a rebellion in Egypt that the Athenians had supported, and, after long disputes, in 449 BCE a peace treaty was negotiated between Persia and Athens (Peace of Callias), which obliged the Persians not to interfere in Greek affairs and the Greeks not to invade Persian territories. When Artaxerxes died in 424 BCE, his sons plotted against each other, and at last one, Ochus, assumed the throne under the name of Darius II. Most of his effort was spent in reducing rebellious satraps who used Greek mercenaries as their main forces. One of these, Hystaspes of Lydia, was aided by Athens. Darius retaliated by allowing his younger son Cyrus, who had been appointed as the supreme leader of the western satrapies, to support Sparta so decisively that it overwhelmed Athens in 404 BCE.

Cyrus was a warrior prince of great ambition. His strong position provided him with the opportunity upon his father's death to raise an army from Greeks (mainly Spartan mercenaries) and non-Greeks and contest the throne. His older brother Artaxerxes (II) met him at Cunaxa on the Euphrates north of Babylon. Here Cyrus won the day but was killed in the battle (401 BCE). The Athenian historian and soldier Xenophon led the Greek mercenaries home, a feat that was interpreted as the result of Persia's weakness. It was fortunate for Persia that the Greeks remained disunited. But to take revenge on Sparta, Artaxerxes rebuilt Athenian forces and through them inflicted a severe defeat on Sparta. Soon he fell out with the Athenians, however, and lent his support to the Spartans. Eventually, a peace treaty ("King's Peace") was negotiated in 387–86, which recognized Persian authority over Cyprus and the Greek cities of Asia Minor. But signs of weakness appeared everywhere, and satrap rebellions became chronic during Artaxerxes' reign. Egypt remained independent for decades, and Persian satraps—such as Datames, Pharnabazus, and Orontas—relied more and more on Greek mercenaries. Greek commanders increasingly found a welcome reception at the royal court as well and were appointed as generals and co-generals of the royal army and navy.

Despite all troubles, the organization of the Persian Empire was so sound that its institutions continued to function regularly. In fact, a period of recovery came with the usurpation of the throne by Artaxerxes III (368–38 BCE). His armies put down rebellions in the Levant and Cyprus and once more reduced Egypt. But his assassination and the turmoil that followed destroyed all hopes of rejuvenation. Just at that time, Philip II of Macedon expanded his sway over Greece and planned an invasion of Persia. After his murder, his successor Alexander the Great carried out this plan with the help of the best professional army the world had seen. His Persian

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opponent Darius III made several efforts to resist, but his armies were no match for the better-led and better-equipped Macedonian professional forces. He was defeated, and fled eastward to organize resistance in the Iranian heartland. But commanders who were unhappy with his conduct assassinated him and went on fighting a national war for eight more years. In 330 BCE, Alexander put an end to the Persian Empire by deliberately sacking and burning Persepolis, the cradle of the Persians, and thereafter ruthlessly wiping out any resistance by east Iranians. However, his own empire fell apart after his death in Babylon in 322 BCE. Seventy years later, north Iranian Parthians started the recovery of Iranian lands from the Macedonians and by 140 BCE succeeded in establishing another Iranian empire, which rivaled that of Rome and lasted until 224 CE, when it was replaced by the second Persian Empire of the Sasanians (224–650 CE).

Organization

Cyrus and Cambyses had incorporated several states into a loose federation, with irregular taxation[13] and large autonomous provinces (satrapies).[14] Their heavy reliance on non-Persian officials and institutions of subject states encouraged particularism among Iranian magnates and nationalism among conquered nations—tendencies that resulted in chaos and rebellions and nearly destroyed the Achaemenid federation in 522 BCE. Darius had to reconquer the regional states and place them within a sound entity. His state was the first world empire, extending from Sogdiana by the Aral Sea and the Punjab Valley of the Indus all the way to the Danube, Cyprus, Libya, and Ethiopia, and thus it contained all the peoples of the earlier Near Eastern states of Media, Lydia, Egypt, and Babylonia. Darius was very aware of this universality, and repeatedly and proudly says in his inscriptions that it was "a kingdom containing all nations and all languages." Achaemenid inscriptions name thirty "peoples" who were subject to the King of Kings, and each one of them is symbolically represented on Persepolitan monuments as a "throne-bearer"—in the sense of a guardian of the empire—of equal height and equal rank.

Although the Persians and Medes shared domination and others were placed in important positions, the Achaemenids did not—could not—provide a name for their multinational state. Nevertheless, they referred to it as *Khshassa*, "the Empire."

The Persian administration, while liberal, maintained a regard for law and order. As long as the subject nations obeyed the central authority and paid their taxes, they were free to follow their own laws and religious traditions, continue their artistic norms, retain their own languages, write in their own script, and maintain their own social system. In some cases, even local dynasties were left undisturbed and native kings retained their hereditary rights to kingship. Hence, the Persian king was called "the Great King" or "the King of Kings." Administratively, the empire

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was divided into twenty taxation districts, which the Greeks called "satrapies" and understood as provinces. Each province was administered by a civilian governor, the satrap (from Iranian **khshathrapava-*, "protector of the kingdom"), who was aided by a military commander and a treasurer. There was thus a division of powers in each satrapy, aimed at preventing concentration of power in one office with potential for rebellion. In addition, these officers were inspected by the most trusted envoys of the sovereign (called the "King's ears and eyes"), who had full authority to reward meritorious deeds and punish unlawful ones.

The multinational nature of the Persian Empire was also instrumental in the choice of royal residence. Four cities, Susa, Babylon, Ecbatana (Hamadan), and Persepolis, served as the "capitals" of the empire, and several cities—Bactra (Balkh) in the east, Sardis in Anatolia, and Memphis in Egypt—served as provincial capitals and cardinal points of Persian administration, thereby helping to spread Persian culture in various distant lands. Major cities were linked by the "royal roads" on which a courier system was maintained. Herodotus describes[15] the royal road from Sardis to Susa, and remarks:

> Nothing mortal travels so fast as these Persian messengers. The entire system is a Persian invention. Along the whole line of road there are men stationed with horses, in number equal to the number of days which the journey takes, allowing a man and a horse to each day; and these men will not be hindered from accomplishing at their best speed the distance which they have to go, either by snow, or rain, or heat, or by the darkness of night. The first rider delivers his dispatch to the second, and the second passes it to the third; and so it is borne from hand to hand along the whole line.[16]

The Persian kingship was hereditary within the Achaemenid house, and the Persian king styled himself as the Great King, King of Kings, "king of many countries containing many people." However, unlike previous Near Eastern dynasties, they did not claim divine descent or nature. They invariably repeated in their proclamations that they held the kingdom "by grace of Ahura Mazdā," that everything they did, they did under the protection of Ahura Mazdā. Although the Persian king was sovereign and his words had the force of law, several factors moderated this absolutism. He was bound by tradition to respect the views of elders and consult great nobles on important occasions; he had to marry from the great nobles' families; he could not pass arbitrary judgment; and there was always the fear of assassination if he went too far in autocracy.

Finance

To enhance the economic basis of the empire, Darius the Great instituted a number of measures with long-lasting effects. He established a fixed taxation system, coined money, built canals and underground waterways (*kariz* in modern Persian), and improved the royal navy and the arteries of the empire in such a way that a system

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of travel authorizations by the king or his high officials allowed travelers to draw provisions at daily stopping places. His constructions employed large numbers of workers and artisans of diverse nationalities, some of them deportees, thereby enhancing the economy and intercultural relationships. He also ardently advocated cultivation of the soil.

Darius the Great first assessed the means of his subjects using competent surveyors and then levied appropriate but fixed taxes upon each area. Herodotus gives us, from Persian records, a catalogue of the tributes (which remained fixed for two centuries), and others emphasize the fair nature of the system, even adding that great incentives were given to cultivators and artisans as well as to the guardians of the empire. Thus, those who cultivated barren lands were exempted from tribute for five generations[17] and Ionian and Samian artists received enormous prizes, while the Persians, who supplied the elite corps of the imperial army, were exempted from taxes altogether. The total yearly tribute, as calculated by Herodotus, was thus under 15,000 talents of silver.[18] This remained a fixed amount throughout the Persian period,[19] but was increased to 30,000 by Alexander.[20] Further measures brought new prosperity to the subjects as a whole: numerous garrisons and a standing army maintained security, and roads, bridges, and canals facilitated trade. For instance, Xerxes dug a canal around the Athos peninsula to deepen its harbor, and Darius linked the Red Sea to the Nile and thence to the Mediterranean with a canal.

To facilitate trade and also to standardize the means of transactions, Darius introduced a royal Persian coinage. Up to his reign, trade and payments had been in barter or in the monetary systems of Lydia (gold coins of Croesus) or various Ionian cities. Darius struck coins in both gold and silver. The gold coin weighed about 8.4 grams and was named after him (rendered in Greek as *dareikos*, "that which belongs to Darius," anglicized as *daric*); the silver, called *shekel* (a term still used as the monetary unit in Israel), weighed about 5.6 grams. Both bore on the obverse (head) the image of the Persian king in his national dress and carrying his national weapon, the bow. Twenty shekels were worth one daric, and equaled the monthly wage of a mercenary soldier. The Persian policy of provincial freedom allowed vassal kings (of Lycia, Sidon, Cyprus, etc.) and Iranian satraps of western provinces (where interaction with Greeks was strong) to coin money and even place their own images on the coins. But none could coin in gold, which remained the prerogative of the Great King. The placing of portraits on coins was thus a Persian innovation, and some satrapal specimens are fine pieces of artistic renditions of human imagery.

Echoing the Avestan statement "the Earth feels most happy … where one of the faithful cultivates corn, grass, and fruits,"[21] the Persians laid great emphasis on cultivation. Darius wrote to Gadatas, a governor in Asia Minor, a letter which partially survives in a Greek copy of the Roman period:

> King of Kings, Darius, son of Hystaspes, to his subject (Greek 'slave') Gadatas thus says: I hear that … you are cultivating my land, introducing food-crops from beyond Euphrates into lower Asia; I commend your policy, and for this great credit will be given to you in the house of the King.

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Armed Forces

Darius ardently prayed, "May Ahura Mazdā protect this country from a [hostile] army, from famine, from the Lie." Himself a soldier of first rank "both afoot and on horseback," Darius gave the Persian Empire a truly professional army, composed of cavalry and light infantry and organized according to a decimal system. All Persians served in this army from the age of twenty to thirty. Training was rigorous and pay generous. The army had two duties: to defend the empire and to help watch over the provinces.

Earlier Achaemenids relied on regional contingents, especially cavalry, and evidently recruited as the need arose. Darius put his trust mainly in Iranians—Medes, Scythians, Bactrians, and other kindred nations, but above all on the Persians: "If you thus shall think, 'May I not feel fear of (any) other,' protect this Persian people." Henceforth, the mainstay of the imperial army consisted of ten thousand picked Persian infantrymen, the Immortals, who defended the empire to its very last day.[22] Darius ruled some fifty million people within the largest empire the world had seen. But he and his successors showed a distinct awareness of their racial and national identity. In an inscription carved on his tomb, Darius introduces himself as follows: "Great King, King of Kings, King of countries containing all kinds of men, King in this great earth far and wide, son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenid, a Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan [=Iranian], of Aryan lineage." These "countries" were not equal in stature: non-Iranian lands paid considerably larger tribute, while Iranian lands paid much less but contributed more to the armed forces.

Law

The Persians laid great stress on law and order. The Iranian religion taught that Ahura Mazdā had created this world and maintained it on the basis of *Arta*, order based on truth. As representative of Ahura Mazdā, the Persian king had to maintain the *Arta* throughout his realm. The Persians, says Herodotus, "regard telling a lie as the most disgraceful thing in the world, and next worse to owe a debt, because among other reasons the debtor is obliged to lie."[23] Darius the Great equated the Lie with Evil, which ruins the land and people. He ardently prayed to Ahura Mazdā for the protection of his country from the Lie, enemy hosts, and famine. Herodotus testifies that "the Persians carefully instructed their sons from their fifth to their twentieth year in three things alone: to ride, to draw the bow, and to tell the truth."[24] It was for this reason that the Persians carefully measured the guilt and service of a person before pronouncing a sentence. For the same reason, Darius declares in his epitaph:

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> What is right, that is my desire. I am not a friend of the Lie-follower…What a man says against a man, that does not convince me until he satisfies the Ordinance of Good Regulations [i.e., proves it according to the law].

The Persian word for "law" was *data*. The solemnity of the Persian legal system was such that this word entered Aramaic, Hebrew, and many other languages. Plato had no doubt that it was the good laws established by Darius that had held the Persian Empire together until the writer's time.[25] Yet, not wishing to impose their laws, language, or religion upon subject nations, the Persian kings maintained a strictly defined level of interaction. By royal decrees, local jurists[26] codified the laws of their own nations, and imperial authorities then enforced those laws. Thus, the Jews worked according to Biblical laws with the royal sanctions, the Egyptians according to older Egyptian laws, the Iranians according to the Avestan injunctions and their local traditions. An Egyptian demotic document preserves a letter Darius wrote to his satrap in Egypt and serves to illustrate this point.

> Let the wise men who are among Egyptian warriors, priests, and secretaries and are gathered from (the schools) of temples be sent to me, and let the ancient laws of Egypt created up to the forty-fourth regnal year of Pharaoh Amasis [the first year of the Persia occupation] be written down—those laws which concern the pharaohs, temples, and people; let them bring here to my court.

Following this order, Darius had Egyptian legal scholars codify their national law and enforced it in the name of the royal authority. The Egyptians were so pleased with this measure that they ranked Darius among their great "national" lawgivers.[27]

The benevolent Persian policy had a great impact on contemporary and later peoples, and Babylonian, Egyptian, Hebrew, and Greek documents testify to the great respect the subject nations and later states showed for the Persian Empire.

Language and Scripts

In accordance with the policy, the Persian administration recognized several languages and scripts as official. Elamite, Babylonian, Aramaic, hieroglyphic Egyptian, and Greek were used in the royal and provincial chancelleries, and when in 521 BCE Darius the Great ordered his scribes to invent a cuneiform script for the Old Persian language (which he calls "Aryan," or Iranian, because it was understood by other Iranians), he used it only as one of the official or ceremonial writing systems, and then mainly on the Bisotun relief and on monuments in Persepolis and Susa.

The Persians themselves spoke a dialect of Old Iranian, but during the early Achaemenid period most of the Iranians could understand a common language. Old Persian, together with Median, Parthian, and Avestan, developed into classical New

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Persian by the medieval period. A royal chancellery coordinated the central administration with its main seats at Persepolis, Susa, and Babylon, although other chief cities of the empire had their own. Bureaucratic organization was a time-honored institution in the Near East, but Darius reformed it to accord with the needs of a more centralized empire. Aramaic was retained as the lingua franca, especially in trade, and "Imperial Aramaic" soon spread from India to Ionia, leaving a permanent trace of the Achaemenid organization. Elamite and Babylonian cuneiform systems were used in Western Asia, while hieroglyphics prevailed in Egypt. To emphasize his Persian origin and to give the Persians a writing of their own, Darius appears to have commissioned, early in his reign, a group of scholars to create a writing system specifically for Persian. The result was the Old Persian cuneiform, perhaps the simplest and most pleasing of all cuneiform systems. Although this was a ceremonial writing system, used only in official inscriptions, it nevertheless gave the Persian Empire a distinct novelty and a form of independence.

Religion

Darius and his successors adhered to Mazdayasnian ("Mazdā-worshiping") faith. This had been preached by Zarathustra (also known as Zoroaster), the prophet of ancient Iran, to eastern Iranians sometime before 1000 BCE, and was based on three pillars: the supremacy of the Creator, Ahura Mazdā; man's absolute free will in choosing between the Good and Evil; and a Day of Judgment. It is man's free will that eventually tips the scale for the supremacy of Ahura Mazdā and brings about his Kingdom after the Day of Judgment, when we are all called to account for our deeds. The faith emphasized the love of truth and the pursuit of wisdom, wealth, and happiness, always stressing the importance of "good thoughts, good words, and good deeds." The Mazdayasnian religion had spread westward and was destined to become the religion of Iran until the coming of Islam in the seventh century CE. Achaemenid inscriptions often start with this invocation: "Ahura Mazdā is the Great God, who created this earth, who created that yonder sky, who created mankind, who created the happiness of man, who made X king, one king of many." Everything the kings do they do "with the favor of Ahura Mazdā," and when Darius prays, he says, "may Ahura Mazdā protect this land from a (hostile) army, from famine, from the Lie." In Darius' inscriptions one senses a great personal devotion combined with a great mission. When Ahura Mazdā "saw this earth in commotion, [he] thereafter bestowed it on me, made me king. I am King, by the favor of Ahura Mazdā I put it down on its place." "Ahura Mazdā is mine; I am Ahura Mazdā's." These feelings echo Zarathustra's utterances and attest to Darius' piety. With characteristic Achaemenid religious tolerance, however, Darius supported alien faiths and temples "as long as those who held them are submissive and peaceable." Thus, he funded the restoration of the Jewish temple originally decreed by Cyrus,[28] showed favor toward Greek

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cults (attested in his letter to Gadatas), followed Egyptian religious rites, and supported Elamite priests. Not only did the Persians refrain from imposing their faith upon others, but also, when in foreign lands, they showed respect for local rites and shrines.

Iranian priests are called magi (singular magus), "wise men," evidently traditionally coming from the Median tribe of the Magi (i.e., not every tribesman of the Magi was a priest). The Persian religion as described by Herodotus "from personal knowledge"[29] corresponds to the faith preached by the Avestan hymns to major divinities (*yashts*):

> The Persians have no images of gods, nor temples nor altars, and consider their use as a sign of folly.... Their habit is to ascend the summit of the loftiest mountains and to offer sacrifice to Zeus [= Ahura Mazda], which is the name they give to the whole heaven. They likewise offer to the Sun [here Mithra] and the Moon [Mah], to the Earth [Spenta.Armaiti], to the Fire [Adur], the Water [Apam.Napat], and the Wind [Vata/Bad]. These are the only gods whose worship they have inherited from their ancient ancestors. Later they borrowed the worship of a mother goddess [i.e., Ishtar/Anaitis, whom the Persians identified with their Avestan warrior goddess of fertility and waters, Anahita].

Art

The Persians loved artistic creations, especially luxurious ones, regardless of their origins. The purpose of their art was to portray the beautiful world of Ahura Mazdā (*frasha*) in the best form. Xerxes carved four trilingual texts on the pillars of his "gatehouse" at Persepolis, which include the following proclamation:

> By the favor of Ahura Mazda this Gate of All Lands I built. Many other wonderful constructions were built within this (city of) Persepolis, which I built and which my father built. Whatever beautiful construction is seen, all that by the favor of Ahura Mazda we built.

Since the Persians were a handful of people in comparison to the vast number of their subjects, and since they created a "world empire" in the space of only thirty years, they had neither enough manpower nor sufficient time to develop a distinctly "Persian" style in art; consequently, it was natural that they should employ artists and artisans from among other peoples. In addition, as Herodotus testifies, the Persians readily adopted foreign customs and "as soon as they hear of any luxury they instantly make it their own."[30] This attitude enabled them to make proper use of the cultured and artistically creative ancient Near Eastern peoples. The Great Kings and satraps employed artists and artisans from among the subject nations, and paid them fairly generously to design and build palaces in various centers of the empire. In this way, different cultures and artistic styles were brought into contact, resulting

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in a flow of mutual influences. From the intermingling of ideas and fashions, and under the supervision and planning of Persian masters, emerged the so-called Royal Style of art, which was both refreshing in its simplicity and delicacy and stunning in its splendor and richness. The Royal Style flourished under Cyrus the Great, Darius I, and his two successors, and all subject nations contributed to its development, although the influence of the Ionians has been exaggerated at times. Thus, one may be justified in stating that the "Royal Achaemenid Art" was the seasoned art of the ancient Near East under new supervision. This is best illustrated by a foundation inscription that Darius the Great placed beneath the walls of his audience palace at Susa. After praying to Ahura Mazdā and introducing himself, Darius records:

> The ornamentations of this palace which I built at Susa were brought from afar.... The digging of the earth for foundation and the packing of the cavity with rubble and the molding of bricks for the construction were done by the Babylonians. The cedar timber was brought from a mountain in Lebanon: the Assyrians took it to Babylon, and from there the Carians and Ionians brought it to Susa. The sissoo-timber was brought from Kerman and Gandara. The gold used here was brought from Sardis (Lydia) and Bactria. The precious stone lapis lazuli and carnelian which was used here were brought from the land of Sogdians. The precious stone turquoise which was used here was brought from Choresmians. The stone columns which were worked came from Abiradu, a village in Elam. The stonecutters who did the work were Ionians and Sardians. The goldsmiths who ornamented with gold here were Medes and Egyptians. Woodwork masters were Sardians and Egyptians. Those who made the baked brick were Babylonians. Those who adorned the walls were Medes and Egyptians. Says Darius the King: at Susa a heavenly beautiful work was ordered and a very excellent work was done!

Similarly, on the southern wall of the Persepolis terrace Darius recorded the building of Persepolis in four inscriptions. The Babylonian text testifies that many "nations cooperated in the construction of this" monument, while the Elamite text describes its purpose and nature:

> By the grace of Ahura Mazda I built this acropolis (fortress). And Ahura Mazda with all gods so desired that this fortress be built. And so I built it. And I built it secure and beautiful and adequate, just as I had intended.

The first Achaemenid rulers were untiring builders. Cyrus the Great built Pasargadae (situated some 80 km north of Persepolis), which served as a ceremonial capital of the Persian Empire and the site of its kings' coronations. Then Darius founded Persepolis in the heart of his domain, not as a political and economic "capital" but as a royal residence in the spring (as Susa and Babylon served as the royal residences in the winter and Ecbatana in the summer) and the setting for celebrating the great national and religious festival of Nawruz, the Persian New Year (which normally coincides with the spring equinox, around March 21). The Greeks turned "Parsa" into "Persepolis," supposing it to mean "the city of the Persians." Of this city only a ruined acropolis has survived, but even in its present state it counts as the jewel in the crown of Persian art.

The palaces covered an area of 125,000 square meters and reached to 18 meters above the level of the Marvdasht plain. They stood on a promontory of a mountain formerly called Kuh-e Mehr ("Mount Mithra") but more recently known as Kuh-e

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Rahmat ("Mount Mercy"). The very old name indicates that the site was sacred, and in general, ancient people regarded mountains as holy sites. Darius planned and built several of its palaces, and his son Xerxes and grandson Artaxerxes I finished the structures. But repair works and additions or alterations went on during the entire Achaemenid period. Two of the Achaemenid kings, Artaxerxes II and III, were entombed in the rock-cut tombs inside the hill on the east side of the terrace. In 330 BCE, Alexander of Macedon took Persepolis, massacred its inhabitants, and looted and then burned its houses and palaces. Diodorus reports:

> Alexander gave it to his soldiers to plunder, all but the palaces. It was the richest city under the sun and the private houses had been furnished with every sort of wealth over the years. The Macedonians raced into it slaughtering all the men whom they met and plundering the residences; many of the houses belonged to the common people and (yet) were abundantly supplied with furniture and wearing apparel of every kind. Here much silver was carried off and no little gold, and many rich dresses gay with sea purple or with gold embroidery became the prize of the victor. The enormous palaces, famed throughout the whole civilized world, fell victim to insult and utter destruction.

The ruins of Persepolis bear testimony to the cultural achievements of a world empire that employed artists of various nations. They reveal similarities with all ancient monuments in columns, capitals, architraves, sculptural styles, and mannerisms; yet one recognizes them as Iranian due to their plans, sculpted subjects, use of space, and interrelation of the functions of each monument.

NOTES

1. J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 305.
2. Isaiah 41:25.
3. Isaiah 44:28, 45:1–3.
4. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 315.
5. Herotodus *Histories* 4.44.
6. Ibid., 2.158.
7. Ibid., 1.103–106.
8. Ibid., 1.201, 214.
9. Ibid., 4.87–8.
10. Ibid., 4–167, 197–205.
11. Ibid., 6.115, 124.
12. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 1.
13. Herodotus *Histories*, 3.89.
14. Ibid., 3.120–9; 4.165–7, 200ff.
15. Ibid., 5.52–3.
16. Ibid., 8.98.
17. Polybius *Histories* 10.28, 3.
18. Herodotus *Histories*, 3.95.

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19. Cf. Ibid., 6.42.
20. Justin 13.1:9.
21. *Vedidad* 3.4, 23.
22. Q. Curtius 3.3:13.
23. Herodotus *Histories*, 1.139.
24. Ibid., 1.136.
25. Epistles 7, 332b.
26. Herodotus *Histories* 3.31; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 7.13–14; Esther 1:13f.
27. Diodorus 1.95, 4.
28. Ezra 5. 1–6.15.
29. Herodotus *Histories* 1.131.
30. Ibid., 1.135.

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CHAPTER 5

IRAN AT THE TIME OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND THE SELEUCIDS

EVANGELOS VENETIS

The lack of Persian sources both about the fall of the Achaemenid Empire and Seleucid rule in Iran is an important issue for the Iranian history of this period. The available textual sources are found mainly in Greek and Latin. Hence, whatever is known today is drawn from the textual evidence of the victorious side of the war, the Macedonians and the other Greeks, while the Iranian historical point of view remains silent. Another important point is that although there are substantial sources for Alexander's life and the conquest of Iran, the same is not true for the Seleucid period.

A number of authors dealt with Alexander's personality and life; surviving works include Diodorus Siculus's universal history in Greek at the end of the first century BCE, Quintus Curtius Rufus's *History of Alexander*, Justin's second-century CE Latin epitome of the now lost account of Pompeius Trogus, and Plutarch's *Life of Alexander* in his *Parallel Lives*. The main source for Alexander's life is Arrian, who wrote the *Anabasis of Alexander* and *Indica*. The works of Callisthenes, Aristoboulus, Onesicritus, and Cleitarchus are lost today. Other sources for this period include coinage and seals.

The account of Hieronymus of Cardia about the wars of the Successors is a valuable source for the first fifty years after the death of Alexander (up to 272 BCE) with respect to the Seleucid period in Iran. Diodorus in the *Library of History* (books XVIII–XIX) made extensive use of Hieronymus's material, and he is the main source for the struggles of the Successors. Part of Hieronymus's writings can be also traced indirectly through Arrian's work about the events after Alexander's death (*Ta meta*

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ton Alexandron) and through Plutarch's lives of Eumenes and Demetrius. Other historians of the third century were Phylarchus, Megasthenes, and Timaeus of Tauromenium.

The period from 264 BCE up to 146 BCE is covered adequately by the work of the Greek historian Polybius from Megalopolis. Appian, a Greek of Alexandria (second century CE), in his *Roman History* gives valuable material for the *Syrian Wars* (book 11). Along with Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus, 1 and 2 Maccabees, and Josephus, Appian is a useful source. But his work is difficult to evaluate, as he is rather selective.

Other useful sources are the Babylonian astronomical diaries and the Greek inscriptions from Amyzon, Mysia, Sardis, and elsewhere. There are also cuneiform Hellenistic inscriptions (literary, astronomical, and scientific texts, king lists, and chronicles) and Hellenistic Greek inscriptions. Excavations in modern Iran, Iraq (Babylon), and the Persian Gulf (Ikaros-Failaka island), and especially in Central Asia (Tilia Tepe, Ai Khanoum, Takht-e Sangin) have revealed a variety of pieces of metalwork, sculptures, inscriptions, terracottas, seals and coins, bullae, ostraca, and pottery, shedding considerable light on the fragmentary Seleucid period in Iran.

Iran and Alexander (334–323 BCE)

The campaign of Alexander against the Achaemenid Persian Empire (spring 334 BCE) was the result of the political antagonism between the Iranians and the Greeks in the previous two centuries. In the early fourth century BCE, the Achaemenids achieved through diplomacy what they had not succeeded in accomplishing by force in their campaigns against Greece in 490 BCE and 480–79 BCE. Achaemenid foreign policy aimed at continuing their success on the Greek front, but an internal political upheaval, the Satraps' Revolt, brought continuous instability to the empire and kept the king busy, distracting him from his foreign plans. The emergence of Macedon as the new overwhelming power in the Greek world was an obstacle for the king's plans and a potential threat to his power. The struggle for the Iranian throne led to the internal destabilization and disintegration of the Achaemenid Empire for three consecutive years (338–35 BCE). Eventually Darius III Codomannus, who prevailed in the struggle (335 BCE), attempted to strengthen his empire, but time was running out for the Achaemenids.

In 338 BCE, after the battle of Chaeronea, Philip II of Macedon became the absolute ruler over the other Greeks. A year later, in Corinth, Philip achieved the unprecedented political unification of the Greeks under one leader, himself. The Hellenic League soon declared war against the Achaemenid Empire, and the Greeks appointed Philip as commander in chief of the expedition. In spring 336 BCE, Philip assigned Parmenion the mission of invading northwest Asia Minor, which was successfully accomplished. Due to the preexisting internal instability, the defense of the Iranians

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was weakened and disorganized. In 336 BCE, the assassination of Philip II in Macedon ended his dreams of leading the campaign against Darius. The twenty-year-old son of Philip, Alexander III, emerged as the new king and forced the Hellenic League to recognize him as the new commander in chief of the Greeks. Then he led an expedition against the northern enemies of Macedon and put an end to the rebellion of Thebes. It was now clear who had the upper hand in Greece.

Alexander's confidence came mainly from his army, which had been formed during Philip's reign. Its main advantage was the Macedonian phalanx and cavalry. The phalanx was formed by 3,000 foot guards and six tribal regiments of 1,500 men each. The soldiers did not wear corselets; they were more vulnerable but also more mobile. They held small shields with no handgrip so as to hold with both hands the *sarissa* (a pike up to 18 feet long). They also had short swords for close combat. The cavalry, always covering the right wing of the army's formation under Alexander, consisted of eight squadrons of Companions (about 1,800 or more), who were of Macedonian aristocratic background. They wore body armor and a helmet, and carried a lance, a sword, and a *sarissa*.

In 336 BCE, Parmenion's invasion in the Troad and Hellespont alerted the Achaemenid army. Through the satraps of Asia Minor, Darius mobilized sizable military units to deter any further foreign intrusion. In the summer of 334 BCE, Memnon had mobilized a fleet of 400 warships harboring on the Syrian and Phoenician coast. Previously, Memnon had attacked Parmenion in Cyzicus with a limited mercenary military unit and had forced him to withdraw to the Elaitic Gulf.[1]

In spring 334 BCE, Alexander with his army crossed Hellespont from Sestos to Abydos, already conquered, or liberated, by Parmenion. His infantry is estimated to have been 30,000–32,000, and his cavalry forces were about 5,000. A third or less of these forces was formed by the Macedonians and the other two-thirds by the other Greeks. About 15,000 had remained in Macedon under Antipater's command to secure the region.

The Iranian commanders were ready for a full-scale engagement and were expecting Alexander at the plain of Adrasteia, at the foothills rising above the Granicus River. The cavalry of the Iranians was 20,000 strong and was placed ahead of the infantry force of 20,000 mercenaries. The battle occurred probably at dawn of the same day,[2] and Alexander attacked the enemy cavalry near the bank of the river. Alexander sent across the river some scouts, Paeoneans, and some of his Companions. Their goal was to advance in a diagonal way across the river and hold back the Persian defense while the greater part of his army crossed. They were followed first by Alexander and his Companions, the elite cavalry. The Greek infantry followed behind and crossed the river while the cavalry was battling against the enemy. Initially Alexander's vanguard retreated, and the heavy cavalry formed the right battle line of his army. An Iranian son-in-law of Darius made a brave suicide attempt to kill Alexander in person, but Cleitus the Black saved his king's life. Simultaneously, the Iranian cavalry was forced away from the river. The light javelins of the Iranians were not as effective as the Macedonian lances. The line of the Iranians broke in the center, and the whole of Alexander's

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army crossed the river and had the chance to reform. It was then that the Iranian cavalry fled, while the mercenary Greek infantry remained on the battlefield asking for quarter. Alexander, however, ordered a fierce attack, killing all but 2,000 who were to be transferred to Macedon for slave labor. Thus ended the first decisive battle at the Granicus.

The Granicus battle opened for Alexander the gates of the Achaemenid Empire and gave him and his army the psychological advantage in their campaign. Most of all, it strengthened his finances; after the battle, a number of nearby cities came under Alexander's control. In pursuing a war against the Achaemenids, Alexander was aware of the enemy's vulnerabilities and of the risks that he was undertaking to strengthen his role in Greece and against his great foe, Darius.

Darius, on the other hand, had underestimated the potential threat of Alexander. After the defeat of his army, he turned to Memnon, appointed him commander in chief, and gave him permission to transfer the war to Greece. It was decided to strengthen the defense of the fortresses (Miletus, Halicarnassus) and give land to Alexander. While the approved plan was carried out, Darius collected his army in case the enemy did not retreat. Memnon's aim was to defend the important port cities of Miletus and Halicarnassus.

Alexander quickly moved southward and occupied Dascylium (in Phrygia). He then headed from Propontis through the Hermus valley to Sardis, where the citadel, despite its strong defense forces, was surrendered without battle by the Iranian commander. The king lost the strongest fortress and the richest treasury in western Asia Minor. Alexander imposed his own garrison and declared that the city could be governed by its own laws as long as they paid tribute to him. The same occurred at Ephesus four days later. He also sent Parmenion to free the cities of Aeolia and Ionia and to restore their laws; envoys from these cities had come to him and had asked for his protection.

While Alexander was moving southward, he was accompanied by his fleet. Simultaneously, Memnon was moving northward with his fleet in order to meet the enemy. Memnon arrived a few days after Alexander, giving the latter the chance to take Miletus, though after much resistance. Alexander decided to take a gamble and send his fleet back, perhaps to strengthen his rear against a possible counterattack by Memnon. After Miletus, Alexander annexed Caria, Pamphylia, and then Phrygia. In 333 BCE at Gordium he cut the well-known knot, and this act was considered symbolic of his future rule over Asia.

On the other hand, Memnon resumed his own successes on the Aegean front. He managed to reconquer several islands in the central and south Aegean and one or two cities on the Asian mainland. Moreover, he probably had strong acquaintances with Athenian centers of power as well as with Sparta. The king of Sparta, Agis, was willing to cooperate in this counterattack. Memnon's naval and military activity was successful, and he became a nuisance for Alexander, since he was advancing rapidly northward and westward in the Aegean and was able at any time to attack the Greek mainland. Alexander was seemingly losing the game in the Aegean, becoming vulnerable at his rear. The whole campaign was at stake. It was at

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this moment that Alexander was helped by *tyche* (fortune). Memnon died for unknown reasons (accidental death or assassination by Alexander's allies?) while he was harboring at Lesbos and preparing to conduct naval operations further to the north. After that, Darius ordered the mercenaries under Memnon to return to Babylon and his naval force to withdraw to the Syrian coast. Thus, his European plan was abandoned once and for all.

With the army of Asia Minor defeated and Memnon's plan canceled, Darius had to try to stop Alexander with one decisive battle, and this would happen at Issus (333 BCE). The precise details of the battle are unknown. Alexander along with his Companions, a part of the phalanx, and light-armed sections of his army made the first move by crossing the river nearby and attacking the Iranian infantry on the enemy's left wing. However, the Greek mercenaries held the assault at the center of their line, forcing the Macedonian infantry to withdraw and breaking the line of Alexander's army. The Iranians simultaneously attacked the left wing of Alexander's army, which was directed by Parmenion. The latter successfully defended against the assault of the stronger Persian cavalry. Alexander and the section of the Phalanx that had crossed the river flanked the Greek mercenaries, and the battle ended victoriously for Alexander. During the battle, Darius was forced to flee eastward with a part of his army and abandon his chariot along with his family and his treasures.[3] Darius' mother Sisygambis and his wife Stateira were captured, and along with his household they became hostages of Alexander, who behaved toward them in a civilized manner. Darius's reputation had been severely damaged.

In strategic terms, the losses for Darius were tremendous. The loss of manpower on the battlefield was enormous. About 8,000 Greek mercenaries decided to head to Egypt or Greece rather than follow Darius eastward. One of the royal treasuries in Damascus fell into Alexander's hands, enabling him to strengthen his finances and continue his campaign. Moreover, the whole Syrian and Phoenician coast was open to Alexander, who was now able to take control of the royal fleet and put an end to the potential threat of an Iranian naval counterattack. Alexander's plan now was to secure his rear in the eastern Mediterranean and to go southward to Egypt. For the young conqueror, it was important to secure his possessions before campaigning further, even if Darius would thereby find the time to regroup his army.

After the battle of Issus, Darius sent epistles to Alexander offering him an armistice with many advantages for the young king. But Alexander turned his offers down and stated to the Achaemenid king that the whole of the empire was now his property. It was obvious that Alexander's successes on the battlefield had increased his self-confidence.

Alexander headed to the south and, without resistance, annexed the cities of the Syrian and Phoenician coast one after the other. The only city to resist, bravely and fiercely indeed, was Tyre. After a seven-month siege in late 332 BCE, Alexander stormed Tyre, and all the living inhabitants were forced into slavery. New resistance against Alexander arose when he reached Gaza. After Gaza, there was no further resistance to prevent him from advancing toward Egypt. There he was accepted as a liberator,

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and the land of the pharaohs became one of the most vital provinces of his vast empire. Alexander was pronounced a son of Ammon-Zeus at the oracle of the Egyptian god Ammon at the oasis of Siwah in the Western Desert. He founded Alexandria on the delta of the river Nile. In spring 331 BCE, he mobilized his army to go on with his campaign eastward.

In the meantime, having at his disposal the most vital provinces of his empire in Mesopotamia, the Achaemenid king was determined to gamble on a final encounter with Alexander. The ultimate battle for Darius would take place at Gaugamela (a village near Arbela, the modern Arbil). Darius now was in very familiar lands, and he pursued one more opportunity to fight on the ground of his choice. Things, however, did not turn out as he expected. Alexander was aware of Darius's intentions and avoided going toward Babylon. He moved northward and eastward near Nisibis, and from there he crossed the Tigris and moved to Arbela, where the heat was less. The ultimate battle between the two kings took place at Gaugamela in early October 331 BCE. Darius managed this time to fight from the ground of his choice, while Alexander did not. Darius had already encamped in a wide plain where he could make full use of his vast number of troops and especially his cavalry. But Darius had a disadvantage in terms of time. Although Darius chose the terrain, Alexander had the privilege of choosing the time of the battle. He decided not to attack immediately, since he wanted first to rest his army after crossing the Tigris and to prepare it for the battle. This took about four days, and the next day he moved toward the plain where Darius was waiting. He decided to postpone the battle to the following day, as he wanted to observe the movements and positions of the Iranians. Moreover, he wanted to give his men another night of sleep. Alexander's plan was successful. The wide plain made Darius' defense vulnerable, and the constant alert of his army led gradually to its fatigue and demoralization some hours before the battle.

Darius's tired army prepared for battle, which took place at dawn on October 1, when Alexander marched against Darius. The formation of the Iranian army was static. Alexander adopted the same rectangular formation for his army as he had in the battle of Issus. The battle at Gaugamela had the same development as that of Issus. Alexander this time attacked the Iranian army diagonally to the right. In the beginning Alexander faced Darius' central side, but gradually by moving forward he and the Companions passed the terrain where the Scythian chariots could operate, making them ineffective. The left wing formed by the Thessalian cavalry under Parmenion was attacked by the heavy Persian cavalry, but it sustained their attack well enough. While Alexander tried to break the Persian line at the point he was operating, Scythian and Bactrian horsemen attacked him in order to prevent him from advancing further. The Paeonians and the mercenary units of Alexander were heavily attacked by Bessus. As the battle progressed, Alexander's army faced many dangers. While he was trying to force the withdrawal of the center in order to capture it, the other parts of Alexander's army could not advance. Gradually, the phalanx forged on Alexander while the two battalions remained attached to the left wing. The Macedonian line had broken. Unfortunately for Darius, the Iranian center was in complete disarray. While the Iranian and Indian cavalry advanced and

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penetrated the gap, the major part of Darius's army followed their king in his withdrawal. Alexander was after Darius when he received a message from Parmenion requesting Alexander's help so as to sustain the attack of Mazaeus and the heavy Persian cavalry.[4] Alexander listened to his general's request and turned to help him. The Thessalians counterattacked, and Mazaeus with his cavalry was forced to retreat. Soon enough Alexander had full and victorious control of the battle field. The battle at Gaugamela was the last one for Darius. After the battle, Darius headed to Arbela and from there to Ecbatana (Hamadan).

After Gaugamela, Alexander proclaimed himself King of Asia, thus taking Darius's place while the latter was still alive. Alexander's decision to be named king was aimed at weakening the moral of the other Iranian provinces so as to achieve their submission without resistance. When he entered Babylon in October 331 BCE, he was accepted as a liberator.

The next step was to gain the trust and support of the Iranian nobility in the heartlands of the Iranian empire in Persis (Pārs) and Susiana (Khuzistan), along with its capital Susa and the great treasury in Persepolis (Takht-e Jamshid). In order to achieve his goal, Alexander appointed Mazaeus satrap, a reward for the latter's recognition of Alexander's supremacy.

After twenty days, he arrived at Susa, whose satrap surrendered it without difficulty. A treasury of 50,000 silver talents came into Alexander's hands, a vital resource for continuing the campaign. In December 331 BCE, he decided not to go to Media after Darius but moved toward Persepolis, to the greatest treasure of the Achaemenid Empire. He probably followed the route from Susa to the Karun River and on the fourth day crossed on a boat bridge. On the left bank of the river he faced and defeated, without entirely subjugating, the Uxii tribe who lived in the foothills of the Zagros Mountains.

Then Alexander sent Parmenion with a unit of his army along the royal road to Persepolis. He decided to pass through a mountainous area that was the shortest but most difficult route. On the fifth day, attempting to cross the Susian (or Persian) Gates, Alexander suffered his first defeat in the campaign at the hands of Ariobarzanes. In mid-January 330 BCE, Alexander entered the city without resistance.[5] The commander of its citadel made peace with Alexander and invited him to become the possessor of the royal treasury.

As soon as he entered the city, he occupied the royal compounds of Darius and Xerxes and plundered the houses of the local nobility. Then he allowed his men to plunder the city.[6] This act was aimed perhaps at compensating his men after their defeat in the Persian Gates. After Persepolis, it was the turn of Pasargadae's treasury to be annexed. Persis became a satrapy where a Greek garrison was stationed permanently. Alexander stayed in Persepolis for about four months. The catastrophe of Persepolis, a key event in pre-Islamic Iran, took place during this period.

There are two interpretations of the destruction of Persepolis. According to the first, the fire was caused by the exhortation of the Athenian courtesan Thais during a feast when everyone, including Alexander, was in a state of intoxication. Thais urged

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the drunken soldiers to indulge in the destruction of the palaces.[7] According to the second version, the conflagration was Alexander's vengeance for the destruction of the Athenian Acropolis and Xerxes' campaign against Greece a century before (480 BCE). Agis's rebellion against Alexander was still a threat to his interests in southern Greece, and Antipater was busy all the time with the king of Sparta. A propagandistic act like the destruction of Persepolis would have had a great impact in Greece and would have dealt a huge blow to Agis's rebellious movement.

The destruction of Persepolis remained vividly alive in the memory of the Iranians after Alexander's death. It enabled the main opponents of Alexander's policy in Iran, the Zoroastrian clergy, to promote a negative profile of him in the Iranian world. It must not be considered a coincidence that many centuries later (ninth century CE), the Pahlavi sources, reflecting fully the Zoroastrian tradition, also created a negative profile for Alexander. As these sources were compiled much later and had a strong element of fable, they cannot be considered historically reliable. Nevertheless, they probably reflect the beginnings of an older tradition, literary or oral, dealing with Alexander's policy toward Zoroastrianism.

In the spring of 330 BCE, Alexander set out for Ecbatana; when he reached the city, he found that Darius had withdrawn to the east and was on the run. After eleven days of advancement eastward he reached Rhagae (modern Ray, south of Tehran). Darius obviously was trying to avoid Alexander and at the same time perhaps find a way to regroup his forces. However, Darius fell victim to treason by his own close ministers, Bessus, satrap of Bactria; Barzaentes, satrap of Drangiana; and Nabarzanes, head of the *hazārapati*. As soon as Alexander found out about the latest developments, he resumed his pursuit with a smaller military unit and reached Darius on the road to Hecatompylus. Darius had already been executed by his ministers when Alexander caught up with him. Alexander gave Darius a royal funeral, promoting the chivalrous image that he had established already toward Darius's family after the battle of Issus. Alexander wanted to capture Darius alive and make him recognize Alexander as the new king. In return, Alexander would probably have left Darius in charge of his kingdom. In that way it would have been easier for Alexander to administer the vast empire and to eliminate any Iranian upheavals and rebellions. But this did not happen. When Bessus took refuge in his satrapy in Bactria, he proclaimed himself the legitimate successor of Darius. He was now the new obstacle to Alexander's plans to advance eastward.

Alexander invaded Hyrcania and subjugated peacefully or by force the tribes that lived north of the Alburz Mountains up to the south shore of the Caspian Sea, from Rasht to Mardia. After Hyrcania, Alexander headed through Zadracarta and the road from Shahrud eastward to Khorasan. He stopped at Tus, where the local satrap Satibarzanes gave Alexander his submission. Then he marched northward, but was taken by surprise when he was informed about Satibarzanes' rebellion in Artacoana (near Herat). Without much difficulty Alexander restored order there, and the rebel satrap fled to Bessus.

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In summer 330 BCE, he moved southwards to Drangiana (Sistan), following which there were a series of conspiracies against him. Alexander arrested Philotas, accusing him of conspiracy against the king. Philotas was presented to the army, condemned, and executed. Then it was Parmenion, followed by others. The "Macedonian opposition" of senior commanders resulted from their dissatisfaction with Alexander's "pro-Iran" policy concerning the administration of his empire. Moreover, they did not accept Alexander's familiarity with Iranian ways, such as his dress, *proskynesis* (prostration), and other things.

From Phrada, Alexander marched southward through Arachosia to the Hindu Kush and the Kabul River valley (central Afghanistan). In the eastern frontiers of the Iranian world Alexander established a series of fortified cities, such as Alexandria among the Arachosians in Kandahar, and stationed garrisons there. From Alexandria of the Caucasus near Charikar, Alexander moved northward against Bessus, south of the Oxus River (Amu Darya). Alexander's advancement forced Bessus to cross the Oxus and withdraw northward, hoping that the river would prevent Alexander from heading further north. Bessus was wrong. Alexander ordered his men to make rafts and then attempted to cross the river. Bessus's soldiers panicked, seeing Alexander's prevailing army heading toward them. They rebelled, arrested Bessus, and surrendered him to Alexander, who executed him. The greatest threat to Alexander's rule was eliminated.

Considerable resistance awaited Alexander in Bactria and Transoxiana. After dealing with Bessus, Alexander marched to Maracanda (Samarkand) and then to the Jaxartes (Syr Darya). Near the Jaxartes, Alexander met the fiercest and bravest Iranian resistance. Apart from the physical hardships due to battling in unknown terrain, the losses in manpower for the Macedonians and the other Greeks were serious and resulted in their vengeful behavior. Elsewhere, Scythian horsemen from the north bank of the Jaxartes threatened Alexander's army, and in Maracanda Spitamenes besieged the Macedonian garrison. Alexander eliminated both dangers. Alexander's marriage with Roxana, the daughter of the local chief Oxyartes, marked the end of the animosity between him and the inhabitants of Sogdiana and Bactria. Whether Alexander's marriage with Roxana was due to love or was another sign of his political resourcefulness is something that cannot be determined. Perhaps it was a combination of the two.

In late July or early August 327 BCE, Alexander went back to Alexandria of the Hindu Kush on his way to India. Beyond the Hydaspes River (Jhelum), Alexander attacked and defeated King Porus of Paurava. Alexander accepted the submission of the ruler of Kashmir, and through Acesines (Chenab) he reached Hydraeotes (Ravi) and Punjab up to the next river, the Hyphasis (Bea). He planned to advance further eastward, but he was forced by his tired soldiers to abandon his plans. After many years of war, they wanted to return home.

His goal now was to reach the delta of the Indus and the Indian Ocean by sailing downriver. As soon as his fleet was constructed, Alexander and a great part of his army boarded the ships while the rest followed along the banks of the river. Full of independent and warlike tribes, the region from the Hindu Kush to the ocean

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had to be pacified and fortified so as to become a barrier against future intruders. Going against the monsoon, Alexander sailed down one of the main arms of the Indus and reached the ocean.

His next task was to cross the vast desert of Gedrosia (Makran). It took him about two months to cross. He suffered many casualties (at least 40,000 out of the total of 60,000 soldiers) who could not withstand the extreme heat and lack of water. Apparently, it was a great mistake of Alexander's to cross the desert, since Semiramis and Cyrus the Great had suffered similarly huge losses when they had attempted to do the same.[8] In December 325 BCE, Alexander and his army crossed Gedrosia, and then with a part of his army he traveled inland via Sirjan to Pasargadae, where he restored the plundered tomb of Cyrus. Then he headed to Persepolis and Susa.

At Susa, Alexander held official celebrations to inaugurate the new period for his empire. Eighty Macedonians and other Greeks from Alexander's retinue married women of the Iranian nobility. He officially announced the marriage of 10,000 Macedonian soldiers with Iranian women. He himself married two more women, Barsine, daughter of Darius, as his second wife and the daughter of Ochus as his third. It was primarily his connection with the Achaemenid house that interested him, so as to promote his image as the legitimate ruler of the Iranians.

After Susa, Alexander sailed toward the Gulf coast. Then he went up the Tigris to Opis. There his soldiers expressed their opposition to Alexander's intention to send them home. They started complaining to their king that he showed an obvious preference toward the Iranians and that he had adopted Iranian customs. Indeed, after 330 BCE Alexander had begun to change his behavior and policy toward the Iranians, for reasons already mentioned. He had included in his cavalry a unit of Iranians, but he did not attempt to establish mixed units. It was mainly the Iranian customs toward which Alexander showed a particular inclination that enraged his soldiers. He had demanded they adopt the custom of *proskynesis*, the Iranian salute from an inferior to a superior, and normally from the subject to the king. It included basically the prostration of the person who performed *proskynesis*, and it involved worship. As soon as the crisis occurred, Alexander ordered the ringleaders killed at once. The crisis soon ended, with Alexander and his soldiers reconciled.

However, prophecies in Babylon were being spread that his death was close. Alexander, untouched by the omens, founded a new settlement at the Lower Euphrates and then returned to Babylon to prepare for his expedition to Arabia. While Alexander was getting prepared for his Arabian (west Arabian coast, Yemen) and Caspian expeditions, collecting large armies, he fell ill and died on June 10, 323 BCE. He had reigned for twelve years and eight months. The cause of his death remains uncertain. Some think Alexander was poisoned by some of his ambitious political partners, like Antipater.[9] The other opinion is that his death came from natural causes, and many types of illness have been suggested, including malaria and leukemia.

During his reign, Alexander managed to subjugate Achaemenid Iran, the superpower of his era. This was achieved through his political and strategic shrewdness

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and the military legacy of his father, Philip II. Alexander was capable of moving his army with self-confidence through unknown lands. His intelligence sources were usually reliable, and Alexander paid particular attention to this factor.

Another important aspect of Alexander's success in Iran was his pragmatism. He understood that the Iranian empire had a highly sophisticated administrative system, and he knew that he could not change these structures in a few years. Therefore, he retained more or less the same structures. Alexander appointed many Iranian satraps, preserving their previous positions. They were natives who knew the needs of the population and had its respect. Closely associated with the issue of pragmatism were his Iranian manners. Whether Alexander had a personal inclination toward Iranian ways or not, it was necessary to establish a royal profile familiar to the Iranians of his empire, thus continuing the Achaemenid royal tradition. Many aspects of his life and character remain enigmatic. His stance toward the Iranians, during the conquest of Iran and his reign, remains basically unclear; specifically, his chivalrous attitude toward Darius's family, the destruction of Persepolis, his policy to enable the active participation of the Iranians in the administration of his empire, and many other factors. Besides his accomplishments, he showed remarkable maturity for his age. The historical interpretation of Alexander's personality must not be influenced by later political and cultural trends. Alexander should be judged according to the standards of the era in which he lived. His conquest of Iran marked the introduction of Greek civilization into the Iranian world and the inauguration of a new era of syncretism.

Alexander did not appoint a successor before his sudden death. His wife Roxana was pregnant with his son, but his generals were prepared to fight for his throne. Alexander's body was intended to be sent to Siwah with a delay of two years to build a gigantic funeral carriage, after which it was to be sent to Aegae. However, Ptolemy managed to intercept his body in Syria and send it to Egypt. Alexander's body was installed initially at Memphis and then at Alexandria. There it was displayed in a golden sarcophagus and became a political symbol of the Ptolemaic dynasty. Alexander's time had gone; that of his Successors had come.

The Seleucid Period in Iran

Alexander appointed as his successors "the bravest," and his successors involved themselves in an endless period of war (323–276 BCE) in order to prove, in a way, their bravery. The Iranians participated as dexterous fighters in this non-Iranian conflict without being able for the moment to change their political fate.

Seleucus was among those generals who profited the most from the struggle of the Successors (323–301 BCE). He rapidly managed to become an influential figure in Mesopotamia and eastern Iran. After his success in establishing his rule in Babylon (312 BCE), he managed to extend it to Susiana, Media, and the nearby regions.[10] As in

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Alexander's case, Babylon was the key city for Seleucus in the struggle for power. Seleucus was officially connected with Babylon in 319 BCE when he became satrap of the region. When in 315 BCE he was expelled by Antigonus, he had succeeded in the meantime (319–15 BCE) in establishing a good network of patronage in the city.

Seleucus was rapidly strengthened, and after defeating Antigonus on the battlefield, he succeeded in acquiring the royal title (306 or 305 BCE). He managed to annex the eastern satrapies near the Indus valley. During the three subsequent years, Seleucus became the king of a vast country, extending from the Indian Ocean to the Euphrates. He established his capital at Seleucia on the Tigris. The territorial expansion was endless for Seleucus; in 301 BCE he defeated Antigonus in alliance with Lysimachus. Seleucus's rule now expanded to northern Syria. Although he was successful in reconstituting Alexander's empire from Mesopotamia and Syria eastward, he did not manage to include the lands west of the Indus River (Gedrosia, Gandhara, eastern Arachosia).

Seleucus's foundation of the Seleucid capital in the west, in Antioch on the Orontes (300 BCE), was a turning point. In spite of the transfer of the capital, the Seleucids remained for some time capable of controlling the remote Iranian satrapies. The Iranian provinces were of vital importance for them, both in resources and manpower. Besides the region near the Indus, the Seleucids gradually lost the northeastern provinces (Bactria and Sogdiana), where other Greek dynasties established their kingdoms and preserved them even after the fall of the Seleucids (129 BCE). This part of the Iranian world would follow, from the first half of the third century, a different political path under the Greek dynasties of Bactria. The loss of these provinces was not the last for the Seleucids. A large part of their eastern Iranian provinces (Hyrcania, Aria, Drangiana, etc.) would be lost later on, in the mid-third century (250 BCE), by the emergence of the Parthians. In both cases, the Greek kings of Bactria and the Iranian Parthians were initially Seleucid satraps or semi-independent rulers who gradually acquired more independence and eventually established their own kingdoms. In particular, the emergence of the Parthians, in combination with the Romans in the west, would have devastating consequences for the Seleucids in the second century, depriving them of all their eastern provinces. This would mark the end of Seleucid rule in Iran.

Being the king of the greatest part of Alexander's empire, Seleucus I claimed that he was the legitimate successor of Alexander. Since he ruled the Iranian lands of the former Achaemenid Empire, he combined his royal ideology with that of the Iranians. He presented himself as cofounder of the Alexandrian Empire ("Alexander-Seleucus"), following the pattern of Cyrus the Great and Darius I.[11] His comparison to Darius had profound influence on his Iranian subjects. Moreover, his marriage with the Iranian noble lady Apame strengthened his pro-Iran profile and reflected his attempts to continue Alexander's internal policy. His son Antiochus I would become the first Greco-Iranian king in the Seleucid Empire. The Seleucid *basileia* (kingship) was based on coexistence between the Iranian majority and the Greek ruling minority, along with the other cultural entities of their empire. Seleucus married Apame probably as a sign of political unity between the two cultures, the

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Iranian and the Greek, aiming to legitimize his rule. It is unknown whether more marriages took place in the Seleucid court between Iranian and Greek aristocrats.

The Seleucid royal ideology was a combination of Macedonian royal tradition and eastern cultural elements. However, the ideology of the Seleucids must be considered predominantly as a continuation of their forefathers' tradition. Alexander's Successors in Iran innovated by establishing a dynasty based on the personal cult of each king. The cult of the supernatural king was introduced by Alexander in his lifetime. This cult gradually acquired two forms, the "state cult" and the "city cult." The former was the one that the Seleucids established and promoted through their official propaganda. According to this official viewpoint, the king (*basileus*) combined the basic realistic features of skill and experience along with the concept of the "superhuman" protector of the empire. The city cult must have had the same view of the *basileus*, but this time there was a more intimate relationship between him and the city, which acquired more local character. The Iranian notion of *farr* (divine charisma) being overwhelming in the Achaemenid royal tradition does not seem to have influenced the Seleucids. The metaphysical aspect of their self-image must have resulted from their realistic achievements on the battlefield and in the political arena of their time.

One of the basic elements of their kingship was their autocracy. It is uncertain whether this autocracy was influenced by the Achaemenid tradition or remained primarily Macedonian. Autocracy was strongly associated with their "divine" profile and resulted from the strong militaristic aspect of the Seleucid monarchy. As has already been mentioned, the roots of the superhuman self-image of the Seleucids went back to Alexander's time and his military achievements. By adopting Alexander's military profile, Seleucus and his successors established a long chain of king-commanders. The great majority of the Seleucids died on the battlefield, and the Seleucid period in Iran is marked by its continuous wars not against Iranian rebels but against the other successors of Alexander and their descendants. This political reality of the relations among the Hellenistic kingdoms favored the promotion of the military image of the king, who was always required to be present on the battlefield and lead the army against the enemy. Antiochos III the Great is a classic example of a king who must have considered himself close to Alexander's model. The official model of the autocratic, militarily virtuous king was promoted in several ways, including the use of divine symbols in Seleucid coinage and of statuaries (which have not been preserved).

The Seleucids proved to be dexterous regarding civil administration. They made use of patronage, a word expressing the civil policy of the Seleucids in times of peace. Patronage meant that the king was *euergetes* (benefactor) and *soter* (savior). This policy gave privileges to cities and individuals such as tax immunity, military equipment, food, building construction, and the like. Thus, the king was able to create his own alliances. His "Friends" were one of those institutions that promoted the alliance between the king, his court, and the social powers of his empire. Through the system of patronage, the Seleucids were able to promote their royal ideology.

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The Seleucids basically preserved the preexisting administrative system in the Middle East. They realized that they had to rely upon local traditions and cultures if they wanted to succeed as rulers. The role of the Iranians was crucial in this regard. The Seleucid Empire as a political entity must be considered highly centralized, with one power center and a corpus of heterogeneous cultures and societies that did not adopt federal structural prototypes. This empire had a center and a periphery; the eastern Iranian provinces of Hyrcania, Bactria, and Sogdiana, along with Areia and Drangiana, formed the periphery of the empire, while western Iranian provinces such as Media and Persis were a de facto part of the heartlands. The empire was formed by conquest and preserved by military supervision. The levying of tribute, the labor of their subjects, trade, and the defense of the empire were the basic aims of the administrative system.

Regarding satrapy, Seleucus and his successors continued the policy of Alexander. In every land they conquered they appointed a satrap (general, Greek *strategos*), who very often was of Iranian origin.[12] With respect to the number of the satrapies, there is no certainty, because of the scarcity of the sources. Moreover, the term "satrapy" (Gr. *eparchia*) is often confused with "hyparchy," a subdivision of the satrapy. For this reason, Appian's claim that during Seleucus I's reign there were seventy-two satrapies cannot be taken at face value.

The basic feature of the satraps was their connection to the king. The loyal relationships between the administrative officers and the king and the center of power was the foundation for a smooth Seleucid rule. The king had constructed a vast network of supporters ("Friends," a title denoting the close alliance of its holder with the king) whom he always took care to benefit so as to have their loyalty and alliance in the internal political scene. The power of the satraps was based on the personal favor (*eunoia*) of the king toward them. In practical terms, the satrap consolidated his power within his satrapy by holding vast land estates (fields for agriculture and pasture), as well as whole complexes of villages, slaves, and other kinds of extreme wealth.[13] Thus, the satraps were capable of being self-sufficient in financial terms within their satrapies. However, the king kept them under his surveillance by having under his direct control the satraps' subordinate clerical staff (*dioikites, oikonomos*). Each satrapy was divided into *topoi* ("districts"). Most of the satraps were from Macedonia and other parts of Greece, but a considerable percentage of them must have been Iranians, who were appointed in regions with strong Iranian traditions (like Persis).

The language used in administration is a cloudy and uncertain issue. Greek was the official language of the Seleucid Empire, but not the only one. The recently established Greek cities (Ai-Khanoum, Antioch-Margiana, Antioch-Persis, and others) were at the center of economic life and administration, but the non-Greek cities of the Achaemenid Empire (Seleucis-Tigris, Uruk) participated equally in the hectic rhythms of the royal administration. Aramaic continued to be in use because of the practical necessities of administration.

Another aspect of the Seleucid administration were the road and communication systems. The Seleucids preserved the Achaemenid network of roads. The road

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system was supervised by the Seleucid army through the several *stathmoi* (guard posts), especially near important urban centers. The *stathmoi* were supported by the *phylakai* (military zones), which were established in areas crucial to security (e.g., Kermanshah). The road system, vital for the stability of commerce, was equipped even in the Achaemenid period with a number of service stations (caravanserais).

The administrative system was centralized but at the same time flexible, because of the mosaic of local traditions in the empire. The system, like the Achaemenid one, must have been highly sophisticated in order to preserve the unity of the empire and to respond to the needs of the several provinces. The Seleucid administrative policy in the Iranian lands did not differ from that of other provinces like Syria. There were certainly different needs from place to place, but the system, flexible and realistic, must have been unitary.

Adopting Alexander's policy, the most important means for the Seleucids to consolidate their power was the colonization of their empire. This could be achieved though the establishment of new urban centers on the model of the Greek city. The urban environment in Asia was not an innovation of the Greeks, since the Iranians had already developed it. However, the introduction of the Greek city model in an Asian environment was an ambitious project for the Seleucids and aimed at consolidating their rule. According to Appian, Seleucus founded sixteen Antiochs, nine Seleucias, five Laodiceas, three Apameas, and one Stratonicea (in total, thirty-four new cities). This exaggerated statement denotes the enthusiasm for urbanism of the Seleucids.

The Seleucids established these cities by adopting the model of the Greek city, with all its Greek institutions (gymnasium, theater, parliament, prytaneion, and so on). These cities were autonomous, organized on the model of the Greek metropolitan cities, but within the Seleucid administrative model each city was under the supervision of an *epistates* (supervisor-overseer), the royal viceroy. The establishment of these cities was followed by the settlement of Greek populations, who either migrated from Greece or, as was usually the case, were soldiers or mercenaries in the Alexandrian or Seleucid armies. The introduction of several aspects of Greek civilization and the Hellenic lifestyle into the Iranian world happened through urban development by the Seleucids. However, the Greek population in these cities must have remained most of the time a minority, living mainly behind the city walls and not in the countryside.

The economic system of the Seleucids was based on taxation, trade (imports and exports), exploitation of land, and coinage. Regarding taxation, in periods of peace there were a land tax, a crown tax, a poll tax, taxes on trade (imports and exports), a tax on slave sales, a salt tax, and a general sales tax. Additionally, in war time there were special levies. In theory, all provinces (Greek and non-Greek) were equal in terms of taxation, but in practice the king was able to grant several types of immunity to cities, groups, and individuals that had shown excellent behavior toward him and the safety of the empire.[14] Taxation had two functions for the royal internal policy, to bring in revenue in case of its enforcement and political support in case of its exemption.

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The agrarian policy of the Seleucids and the economic realities in Iran (including the relationship between the landowner, the merchant, and the workers) remain unknown. The Seleucids inherited from the Achaemenids an agrarian model (e.g., *qanats*, sloping water-carrying tunnels with vertical shafts), and they brought many innovations to the existing system (e.g., *kleroi*, lots). In particular, the establishment of new cities and the conquest of more lands brought more regions under cultivation (Bactria and the Persian Gulf). The system of production and the economy in general must not have been static.

Two important innovations of the Alexandrian conquest and its aftermath in the monetary economy of the Iranian world were the introduction of the Attic standard and the establishment of more mints for coin production. The Seleucids continued Alexander's policy on this matter, but they did not enforce a closed monetary system. They enabled the free circulation of other types of coins as well, as had the Achaemenids and Alexander. By establishing more mints in their empire, especially in Bactria and the northeast Iranian world, the Seleucids gave a further boost to the circulation of coins among the Iranians (who had already used coins in the Achaemenid period).

As for their army, given that the Iranian world was the backbone of their empire, it is plausible that Iranians formed the major part of the Seleucid army. It was not only the numerical superiority of the Iranians but mainly their military dexterity that made them irreplaceable in the Seleucid army. The Seleucids took advantage of the manpower that the Iranian world offered them. Being de facto heirs of Alexander and the Achaemenids, they adopted and practiced the military schemes and strategies of the Achaemenids in combination with the military innovations of the Macedonian phalanx and cavalry. The role of the Iranians in the formation of the Seleucid army was predominant, not only as light-armed soldiers but also as elite fighters. Being dexterous riders, the Iranians formed, along with the numerically lesser Macedonian elite, the elite of the Seleucid cavalry. They also were the nucleus of the Seleucid archers and the infantry. They came from several regions, but mainly from Persis. In the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, many Iranians in the aristocratic circles retained their lands and were able to participate in the elite cavalry. Their presence in the Seleucid military machine was not occasional (in massive campaigns) but tactical, and they participated in the formation of several garrisons throughout the empire. Archaeological excavations have revealed many guard posts (*stathmoi*) and military zones (*phylakai*) in several parts of Media Atropatene.

The Alexandrian conquest of Iran and the subsequent Seleucid period brought many changes in the religion of the Iranian world. The introduction of the Greek deities and religious tradition was the nucleus of the religious developments in Seleucid times. These developments took place primarily in the Greek cities. Along with the traditional Hellenic institutions of self-government of the polis, the Greek religion was also present in the new urban establishments. Through the urban environment, the Greek religious tradition was transformed and developed in a completely new environment. The Greeks, as a ruling elite, continued their metropolitan religious tradition, but gradually they influenced and were influenced by the Iranian religious environment.

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In the political arena, religion was closely associated with politics. This connection was twofold. First, the divine element appeared as a dynasty savior. The Seleucids introduced in Iran the cult of the deity-savior of their dynasty. For them, the savior was Apollo, who soon was identified with Mithra. The introduction of this cult was the essential element of the royal ideology of the Seleucids. Within this frame, Seleucus I Nicator was considered the son of Apollo, and he had on his thigh the sign of the anchor, Apollo's symbol.[15]

Another reflection of religious influence in politics was the personal cult of the king-god. Antiochus III the Great was the first Seleucid king who established state veneration of himself and his forefathers. However, Antiochus I had already declared his father, Seleucus I, a god and given him the surname Nicator ("Conqueror"). In spite of the quite clear adjectives, the religious context and the meaning the Greeks gave them is unknown. It is uncertain whether the Seleucids wanted to be venerated like Apollo or thought that they had divine nature, and to what extent this nature existed.

Religious syncretism was the main feature of the Seleucid period in Iran. This development was not new. The coexistence of deities of different religious backgrounds, especially those who had common features and functions, was common in Mesopotamia and Western Asia. Thus, the syncretistic development in Iran must not be considered an innovation of the Seleucids but a natural consequence of the Alexandrian conquest. It was the first time, however, the Iranians experienced the massive introduction of the religion of the Greeks in their lands.

The archaeological discoveries of several Greek temples in the region attest to the above developments. The Greek temple of the Savior Goddess on Ikaros (Failaka Island) and the Greek cult of Serapis in Hyrcania (Gurgan) reflect the flourishing of the Greek religious tradition and the development of religious syncretism in Iran. This syncretism is also attested by the development of several Greco-Iranian cults, such as Zeus-Oromasdes, Helios-Hermes, Apollo-Mithras, Hercules-Verethraghna, Angra Mainiyou-Hades-Negral, and others.

The Greeks introduced their religion into the Iranian world through the recently established Greek cities, the nucleus of their power in Iran. These cities were founded in a great range covering all *Ērānshahr* (Alexandria-Arachaton-Kandahar, Alexandria-Margiana-Merv, Antioch-Persis, and many others). But these cities, in spite of their leading role in the economic development of Iran, must be seen as pockets of Hellenism in the vast land of the Iranians who were the vast majority of the population. Thus, it is doubtful whether the Greek religion was very influential beyond the Greek settlements.

Mazdaism, in its several forms, was the predominant religious system among the Iranians from the very beginning. The formation and strengthening of Zoroastrianism and its clergy during the Achaemenid period made it the most influential religious system among the Iranians. It seems unlikely that the Greeks of the cities were able to change the religious standards in the villages and the rural areas in general. They were successful, however, in making their cities forts of Greek culture, which interacted and combined with the Iranian religious reality. Besides,

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the Seleucids were pragmatists and were interested in preserving their power. Respect for the religion of the Iranians must have been based on the principle of political realism.

Lack of evidence is the main obstacle for the reconstruction of the religious reality of this period. Any suggestion about this reality in the villages and the rural areas in Iran is mostly speculative. Within the syncretistic frame, it could be suggested that the Greek religious system influenced the Iranians who were closer to the Greek elite during the Seleucid period, and simultaneously the Greek religion in the Seleucid empire was influenced by the predominant Iranian religious background. However, in spite of this religious equilibrium (the Greek religion in Greek cities and the Iranian religion in villages and older city centers), Mazdaism remained the predominant religious system of the Iranians in the villages and rural areas and in several important centers of the Iranian past, such as Persis.

The Seleucid period was an interval in the reign of the Iranian dynasties on the Iranian Plateau. The Iranians experienced the rule of a foreign dynasty and the introduction of Greek culture, which marked an era of unprecedented syncretism. This syncretism would last longer than the ephemeral political power of the Seleucids.

Chronological Table of Seleucid Kings

(All dates BCE)

305–281	Seleucus I Nicator
281–261	Antiochus I Soter
261–246	Antiochus II Theos
246–225	Seleucus II Callinicus
225–223	Seleucus III Soter
223–187	Antiochus III the Great
187–175	Seleucus IV Philopator
175–164	Antiochus IV Epiphanes
164–162	Antiochus V Eupator
162–150	Demetrius I Soter
150–145	Alexander Balas
145–141	Demetrius II Nicator
145–142	Antiochus VI Epiphanes
138–129	Antiochus VII Sidetes
129–125	Demetrius II Nicator
126	Cleopatra Thea
125–121	Cleopatra Thea and Antiochus VIII Grypus
125	Seleucus V

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121–96	Antiochus VIII Grypus
115–95	Antiochus IX Cyzicenus

Chronology of Alexander and the Conquest of Achaemenid Iran

334	Battle of Granicus
333	Battle of Issus
332	Siege and capture of Tyre (Lebanon)
332–331	Submission of Egypt and Cyrene
331	Battle of Gaugamela (Arbil)
	Submission of Babylon (October 20) and Susa
330	Submission of Ecbatana (Hamadan)
	Death of Darius
330–329 (winter)	Alexander at Persepolis
329	Conquest of Bactria
328	Conquest of Sogdiana
327	Alexander in India
326	Battle of Hydaspes River
	Beas Mutiny
	Voyage downriver to the Indian Ocean
325	Reaching Patala (July)
	Alexander crossing Gedrosia (Makran desert)
	The fleet under Nearchus in the Persian Gulf
324	Alexander in Carmania
	Alexander at Susa (March)
323	Alexander passes away at Babylon (June 10)

Chronology of Seleucids

320	The Triparadeisos Treaty
318–316	Eumenes' unsuccessful campaign in Iran against Antigonus (Seleucus is satrap in Babylonia)
315	Seleucus expelled from Babylon by Antigonus
312	Seleucus's return to Babylon
312–305	Establishment of the Seleucid dynasty by Seleucus I
305	Foundation of Seleucia on the Tigris River

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305–303	The Seleucid conquest of northeast Iran and the truce with the Maurya dynasty
300	Foundation of Antioch on the Orontes
281	Seleucus I murdered; Antiochus I Soter (281–261)
280–279	Antiochus I's first war against Ptolemy II of Egypt
274–271	Antiochus I's second war against Ptolemy II of Egypt
260–253	War between Antiochus II (261–246) and Ptolemy II of Egypt
250	Foundation of the Parthian kingdom by the Parni in Bactria
245	Ptolemy III conquers Mesopotamia and Syria temporarily
241	Peace treaty between Seleucus II and Ptolemy III
231	Seleucus II campaigns against the Parthians
226–223	Reign of Seleucus III
221–217	Antiochus III (223–187) and his war against Ptolemy IV
212–205	Reconquest of northeast Iran by Antiochus III
200–198	War between Antiochus III and Ptolemy V
192–188	Antiochus III's war against Rome
189–188	Defeat of Antiochus III and peace treaty with Rome
170	The Parthian conquest of Iran under Mithridates I of Parthia
169–168	Antiochus IV's war against the Ptolemaic dynasty
165–164	Antiochus campaigns in the East
141	The Parthian conquest of Mesopotamia
140–139	Demetrius II's (129–125) expedition against the Parthians
130–129	Antiochus VII's (138–129) campaigns against the Parthians; end of the Seleucid period in Iran

NOTES

1. Diod. 17.7.3–10.
2. Arr. *Anab.* I.13.2–7, 14.4–5.
3. Arr. *Anab.* 2.11.4; Diod. 17.34.2.7; Curt. *Alex.* 3.11.7–12; Justin *Epitome* 11.9.9.
4. Plut. *Alex.* 33.9–10; Arr. *Anab.* 3.15.1–2; Curt. *Alex.* 4.16.1–7; Diod. 17.60.7.
5. Arr. *Anab.* 3.17–18.
6. Curt. *Alex.* V.6; Diod. 17.71.3.
7. Cleitarchus, *FGrH* 137 F 11; Diod. 17.72.1–5; Curt. *Alex.* 5.7.2–7; Plut. *Alex.* 38.1–8.
8. Arr. *Anab.* 24.2–3; Strabo 15.1.5, 15.2.5.
9. Onesicritus, *FGrH* 134 F 37.
10. Diod. 19.92.5.
11. Justin *Epitome* 38.7.1.
12. Polyb. *Histories* 5.55.1.
13. Diod. 19.90.1.
14. Polyb. *Histories* 5.89.9.
15. Justin *Epitome* 15.4.2.

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CHAPTER 6

THE ARSACID EMPIRE

EDWARD DĄBROWA

THE Roman Empire, in the awareness of its inhabitants, was an unquestionable power, and the only one in the world. An unending stream of victories in successive wars that kept the Roman state steadily expanding seemed to confirm such beliefs. It was not until the Roman defeat at Carrhae in 53 BCE that public awareness registered the existence of another power capable of challenging the *Imperium Romanum* and—contrary to official propaganda—commanding respect. That power was the Parthian state ruled by the Arsacid dynasty, which, when it flourished, extended from Mesopotamia all the way to the Indian peninsula, from Central Asia to the shores of the Indian Ocean. Although the Parthians originated in Central Asia, once they had conquered Iran and Mesopotamia their rulers made a claim to the Achaemenid heritage. Somewhat grotesque to the Romans, such claims became a driving force of Arsacid policies toward all their neighbors. Claims to former Achaemenid domains were not confined only to Asia Minor and the Middle East but extended to lands in Central Asia, Iran, and India.

SOURCES

Our knowledge of Parthian history and of the various aspects of political, social, religious, and cultural life in the Arsacid monarchy is limited by the nature and preservation of historical sources. It is, therefore, worth mentioning at least the principal sources, with due attention to who created them and for what purposes.

The primary historical data always consist of narrative sources whose authors present either the entire history of a given state or selected periods or events, showing them in a cause-and-effect chain. Unfortunately, no such historical record is

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extant that was created in Arsacid territory, as the *Parthian History* by Apollodorus of Artemita, born under Arsacid rule, has not been preserved in so much as an original fragment. All known records on the history of Parthia originated outside the country and in languages of neighboring peoples with whom the Parthians communicated. Works by Greek and Roman authors, to whom we owe our basic knowledge of facts and dates in Arsacid history, are the most important of such records. While indispensable, they do not all deserve equal trust, because their authors did not always possess full and plausible information, not did they fully grasp the social and political realities of the Parthian state. Moreover, they were almost invariably hostile to the Parthians and deliberately deprecated the significance of the Arsacids, who appeared as barbarians to the Greeks, and to the Romans as a burdensome obstacle in their imperial schemes.

Among the Greek authors of the Hellenistic period writing about matters concerning Parthia, Polybius has a special place. In his comprehensive historical work, preserved in fragments, he devoted much attention to the eastern policies of the Seleucids. It is he who transmits to us a description of Antiochus III's expedition to the east late in the third century CE, which was of much consequence for the development of Seleucid relations with the newly created Parthian state.

Intense mutual contacts and numerous conflicts between the Arsacids and Rome from the first century BCE to the third century CE caused the Romans to take a closer interest in the affairs of their eastern neighbor. This led to more attention being devoted to it in works on geography as well as history. The earlier category includes *Geographia* by Strabo and *Naturalis Historia* by Pliny the Elder. Both contain descriptions of the Parthian state, complete with much historical background. The two authors drew from many no longer extant older and contemporary works. Strabo used, among others, works of Poseidonius of Apamea and Apollodorus of Artemita. Standing apart in this category is the little work *Stathmoi Parthikoi* written by a first-century CE author, Isidore of Charax, a Parthian subject, describing the route from Mesopotamia to Hyrcania, complete with information on stations along the way and historical events involved. The list of historical works offering broad discussions on Parthian matters is much longer. Of greatest value for the study of Parthia's earlier history is the *Historiae Philippicae*, a general history of the antique world from Philip II and Alexander of Macedonia to Augustus, written by the late first-century CE author Pompeius Trogus. The work has been preserved to this day as a comprehensive epitome by M. Junianus Iustinus as well as the original prologues to each of its forty-two books. Despite Justin's free dealing with his original text and occasional sentences that end with a different hero and event than they began with, the fruit of the epitomizer's labors affords us an outline of Parthian history from the making of their state in the mid-third century to the close of the first century BCE.

Abundant with political and armed conflict, Roman rivalry with the Arsacids for influence in Armenia and the Middle East could not help having its episodes reflected in historical literature. In their stories, Roman authors writing in Greek and Latin often reached for examples from the more distant past, which enriched

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their accounts with otherwise unknown information. Notable among such works is the *Historia Romana* written at the turn of the first century CE by Velleius Paterculus, which deals with developments in the East in the times of Emperor Augustus. A comprehensive account of Parthian-Roman relations we owe to Tacitus, the author of the *Annales* and *Historiae*, works devoted to the history of Rome in the period from 14 to 96 CE, which unfortunately are not preserved in their entirety. Tacitus's contemporary was Josephus Flavius. Although his focus was the history of the Jews from Biblical times to the mid-first century CE (*Antiquitates Judaicae*) and the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66–73 CE (*Bellum Iudaicum*), his works contain much information on Parthian history. Later authors include Plutarch of Chaeronea, the biographer of notable historical figures, whose lives of M. Licinius Crassus and Mark Antony supply valuable data on the Parthian state and the conflicts with Parthia caused by those leaders. Cassius Dio (fl. third century CE) devotes much space to Parthian-Roman relations in his *Historia Romana*, spanning Rome's history from its founding to his own time. Owing to its value, the work occupies a special place in Roman historical writing. However, like others mentioned above, it did not survive to our time as a whole, which has prevented us from filling many gaps in our knowledge of the final stage of the Arsacid state, to which Cassius Dio bore witness.

It was an expression of special interest in Parthia that some of the Roman authors wrote books entirely devoted to the history of the latter. All that we know are scanty fragments, too short to be of much use, or just titles. This category includes *Parthica*, written in the first half of the second century CE by Flavius Arrianus.

The second century CE, thick with conflict between Rome and Parthia, saw the appearance in Rome of a large number of eulogistic works extolling the successes of Rome's rulers and military leaders in their struggles with the eastern neighbor. The veracity and credibility of such accounts was questionable even in the eyes of their contemporaries.

Narrative texts with a bearing on Parthian history also include those composed in Oriental languages. Of these, the most important are those in Chinese, but their value in reconstructing the history of the Arsacid state is rather limited, because of their fragmentary treatment and the difficult-to-identify names of heroes and places.

Although the primary narrative sources concerning the Arsacids are of foreign origin, this does not mean that no historical records are available from within their empire. At least a few categories can be distinguished. Chief among them are numismatic sources. We have available to us coins issued by Parthian rulers beginning from Arsaces I. Within the Arsacid state, the right of coinage belonged not only to monarchs (coins were issued also by sundry usurpers) but also to some Greek cities under their rule. Coins were also issued by chieftains of the different peoples under the scepter of the Arsacids from the moment they managed to shed Parthian rule. The variety of this coinage, including representations and legends on the coins, supplies numerous hints about the internal history of the Arsacid state, although

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many objective difficulties involved in this type of source prevent their full interpretation. Numismatic sources, like the seals found during archeological excavations, are indispensable to studies on Parthian iconography.

One type of local historical source is made up of signs accompanying the rock reliefs popular in the art of the Iranian cultural circle. Some of them are easily associated with known events and figures. Others lack characteristics needed for precise dating or feature figures bearing common names that are impossible to identify; they bear mute witness to unspecified events.

It is crucial to mention another kind of source that can be classified as documentary. These are records of legal acts and documents released by state institutions in the course of operations. The former are exemplified by unique parchments discovered in Avroman that detail land sale contracts. The latter include ostraca unearthed in great numbers during excavations at New Nisa; these are documents concerning business matters and were a product of Parthian bureaucracy in operation. This category of sources is also known from other sites.

Some material is available from Parthian territory that is of great value and has long been known, but has been made fully available to scholars only due to recent publications. It consists of cuneiform texts of the astronomical diaries produced in Mesopotamian temples. Their uniqueness as a historical source results from their continuity and the exact dating of their entries. The texts recorded astronomical phenomena. Whenever weather conditions allowed it, the sky was observed every day. In addition, from time to time the scribes noted important local events and various natural phenomena, and while they were at it, they even entered food prices. The result is an extraordinary local chronicle spanning several centuries. Many fragments of those astronomical texts originated from the period of Arsacid rule in Mesopotamia. Thanks to the historical data contained in them, researchers have gained an insight into events entirely absent from other records.

A separate body of evidence comes from archeological discoveries. This evidence, though of limited value, nevertheless casts much light on various aspects of Parthian art and material culture. Excavations at Old Nisa that unearthed the remains of a Parthian palace complex have enriched us with knowledge on the material and spiritual culture of the early Arsacids. Other aspects of this culture have been studied thanks to excavations at Dura-Europos, Seleucia on the Tigris, and many other sites.

Despite the great variety and growing number of sources, our knowledge of Parthian history still contains important blanks we are not able to fill. This is partly due to the fact that until recently, many researchers neglected the importance of the Parthian period in the history of ancient Iran, treating it as a transition period between the Achaemenid and Sasanian eras, and as such undeserving of closer attention. One result of this attitude, prevalent especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was the belittling and even the deliberate destruction of materials and finds from the Parthian era uncovered during excavations in Mesopotamia and Iran.

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History

Our knowledge of the making of the Parthian state and of its chronology is full of gaps. We know that it was started by the nomadic tribe of Parni (or Aparni), belonging to the Dahae group of Iranian peoples. Following migrations from Central Asia in search of, among other things, more arable land, they managed in the first half of the third century BCE to occupy territories belonging to the Seleucid state on the Atrek River and along the Kopet Dagh mountain range. Their expansion was facilitated by difficulties the Seleucids were facing just then; they were absorbed in heavy fighting with the Celts, who were making inroads into Asia Minor, and in wars with Egyptian rulers over Palestine. The first leader of the Parni known by name was Arsaces, who, perhaps in the mid-third century BCE, conquered Astauene, a land lying between the river Atrek and the Caspian Sea. It is recognized that this event is connected with the beginning of the so-called Arsacid era in 247 BCE, the starting date of the official Parthian chronology used throughout the state's existence; it is the first certain date in its history, perhaps connected with Arsaces' assumption of the royal title in the city of Asaak, lying in Astauene. Yet we cannot state with confidence whether he really was crowned that year or later, especially since Arsaces' possession of this title is not confirmed by legends on coins issued by him.

By 238 BCE, the invaders had managed to colonize other lands, including Parthyene, after which they acquired the name of Parthians. Their expansion was made possible by the earlier rebellions of satraps of Bactria and Parthyene. Bactria's ruler Diodotus and the Parthyene satrap Andragoras had claimed independence; the former even adopted the title of king. Such centrifugal tendencies stripped the Seleucids of control over the lands that had belonged to them from the collapse of Alexander the Great's empire.

An attempt to regain the lost territory was made about 230 BCE by Seleucus II. It put Arsaces in a difficult position, as he had simultaneously to face the Bactrian ruler. A truce with the Bactrians enabled him to avoid fighting on two fronts, but even then, faced with Seleucus II's army, he was forced to withdraw from captured territories and retreat into Central Asia. Finally, however, the Syrian ruler's retreat, caused by trouble in the western regions of the Seleucid empire, enabled Arsaces not only to reclaim full control over all the lands he had seized before but probably also to increase his holdings in the south. The successes he had won, combined with an alliance with the Bactrian ruler made after Seleucus II's withdrawal, reinforced Arsaces' leadership and permitted him to start laying the foundations for Parthian statehood, which became necessary once the Parthians, having conquered vast arable lands guaranteeing subsistence, lost their interest in migrations in favor of settled life. Consequent to this development was a need to expand local administrative centers and to safeguard their own territory from aggression by neighbors and enemies. Arsaces chose his capital probably somewhere in Parthyene. Although excavations at Old Nisa have not so far yielded any finds identifiable with his activity, the center's exceptional political role in the times of his successors suggests his special

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links with it. Arsaces' achievements won him enormous respect among the Parthians and the status of the "father of the nation." His name became a royal honorific used by all his successors in the Arsacid dynasty he started.

For a long time, contradictory accounts led scholars to dispute the historicity of Arsaces I and the identity of his successor, since some ancient authors relate that after the brief reign of Arsaces I, the throne was occupied by his brother, Tiridates. New interpretations of the sources and the numismatic evidence have helped to modify this picture profoundly. It is now unquestionable that the figure of Tiridates is ahistorical and Parthia's first ruler continued to reign for decades, until ca. 217 BCE, when he was succeeded by his son, known as Arsaces II (ca. 217 – ca. 191 BCE). At the end of the third century BCE, following prolonged peace with the Seleucids, the new ruler had to face Antiochus III, who had decided to restore Seleucid control over territories lost to Parthian and Bactrian rulers. The confrontation, although a hard trial for Arsaces II, ended in his major political success. Antiochus, probably for the price of formal subordination, allowed Arsaces to exercise power, thus consenting to a Parthian state. As Seleucid influence in Iran and Central Asia dwindled and their state was weakened as a result of Antiochus III's defeat in a war with Rome, Arsaces II's acknowledgment of Syrian domination had little lasting political effect in practice.

After the death of Arsaces II, the Parthian throne fell in ca. 191 BCE to the so-called younger Arsacid line. Its first representatives were Phriapatius (ca. 191–176 BCE) and his son Phraates (ca. 176 – ca. 171 BCE). Sources are almost silent about this period in Parthian history. The few facts we know include Phraates I's conquest of the Mardi tribe inhabiting lands south of the Caspian Sea and its resettlement in Parthian-dominated lands of Choarene and Comisene to protect the strategically vital Caspian Gates area. This may suggest that Phraates continued a policy of expansion of his state. We also have grounds to suppose that he greatly helped strengthen the ruler's political position. This was demonstrated by his decision to hand the throne not, as was customary, to his son but rather to his younger brother, Mithradates (or Mithridates), who went down in history as Mithradates I the Great (ca. 171–ca. 132 BCE).

Few rulers in Arsacid history were as distinguished as Mithradates I. During his reign, the Parthian state was transformed from an insignificant political center to a vast and mighty empire. The transformation was the fruit of his large-scale policy of expansion. The detailed chronology of his conquests, given the dearth of sources, is not well known. Even accepted dates are a matter of convention. Mithradates' first booty is believed to have been Bactria, conquered probably in the 150s BCE. By 148 BCE, Media and Media Atropatene had been overrun. In 141 BCE, Parthian armies, having occupied much of Mesopotamia, reached Seleucia on the Tigris and Babylon. Yet a complete subjugation of Mesopotamia took much more time and effort. Mithradates exchanged blows in defense of his possessions with Demetrius II, king of Syria, who launched an attempt to regain lost land in Mesopotamia in 139/138 BCE. However, his greatest distress came from Hyspaosines, king of Characene—a state whose name is derived from its capital city of Charax,

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situated on the Persian Gulf—and the kings of Elymais. The Parthians did manage to break their resistance, but only after many years of heavy fighting. Although Mithradates I and his successors did force both rulers into submission, Parthian hegemony over their lands proved rather short-lived. In addition, some sources mention Mithradates' conquest of lands between Iran and the Indian frontier, but the truth of such claims is beyond confirmation.

The state became with each new conquest an ever more colorful cultural and ethnic mixture, requiring of its ruler greater activity in administration and social policy. It seems that Mithradates I retained in conquered territories the existing administrative structures, entrusting leadership of them not only to his own men but also to representatives of local elites who pledged loyalty to the new overlord. He attempted to win the favor of the Greek populace, which, as territories grew, became an increasingly large proportion of his subjects. An expression of this attitude is the title Philhellene (*Philhellên*), which he included in his royal titulature.

During the reign of Phraates II (ca. 132–126 BCE), another attempt was made by the Seleucids to recapture the lands of Media and Mesopotamia lost to the Parthians. In 131–129 BCE, the king of Syria, Antiochus VII Sidetes, scored important successes, but his mistakes led to his death and decisively buried Seleucid hopes of recovering territorial losses. Almost immediately after that, Phraates had to make his way east to defend his frontiers from the nomadic Scythians, and his last years on the throne were marked by large-scale migrations of peoples inhabiting the vast territories of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Their arrival caused considerable political changes. Even though the Sakas were not an immediate threat to the Parthian state, their presence forced the ruler to take vigorous action to ensure the security of his eastern and northern borders. It was during struggles with them that Phraates lost his life. From then on, defense from invaders became a major challenge facing the Arsacids. The extent of the problem is proved by the fact that in the decades that followed, at least several Parthian kings, including Phraates II's successor, Artabanus I (ca. 126–123/122 BCE), were killed in conflicts with those peoples.

Another period of rising Parthian imperial power came during the reign of Mithradates II (122–91 BCE). Upon ascending to the throne, he first had to deal with king Hyspaosines of Characene, who had taken advantage of Artabanus I's engagement with the nomads not only to release himself from dependence on Parthia but also to overrun all of southern Mesopotamia, probably complete with Seleucia on the Tigris and Babylon. In ca. 122/121 BCE, Mithradates forced him to submit to Parthian domination once again.

Soon after these events Mithradates took an interest in northern Mesopotamia and Armenia, thus far lying outside the sphere of Parthian politics. As a result of his political and military actions, more lands accrued and new rulers were subordinated: those of Adiabene, Gordyene, and Osrhoene, with additional influence won in Armenia. Additionally, Parthian interests were furthered in Asia Minor and the Middle East. The political program drawn by Mithradates II assumed Arsacid recapture of lands once belonging to the Achaemenid Persian Empire. His adoption in 109 BCE of the title of "King of Kings" must have been a propaganda ploy designed

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as part of that program. Together with involvement in the west, Mithradates successfully pursued a policy of recovering lost terrain in Central Asia and eastern Iran. This accomplishment made it possible to open land routes between China and the Mediterranean world. Since they all crossed Arsacid imperial territories, revenues from duties and taxes on luxury goods being transported became an important source of wealth for Parthian rulers.

It is indicative of Mithradates II's determination in seeking to strengthen Parthian influences in eastern Anatolia and in Armenia that he sent in 96 BCE a legation to Sulla, governor of the Roman province of Cilicia, proposing a treaty of friendship and cooperation, conditional on Rome's acceptance of the Euphrates as a line between their respective spheres of influence. As Parthia was still a completely unknown factor to the Romans, the Parthian king's initiative was ignored by Sulla; nevertheless, from then on relations between the two states became increasingly frequent and more formal. Toward the end of his reign, Mithradates actively joined in the struggles between Demetrius III and Philip, pretenders to the Seleucid throne, in hopes that his support of one of the rivals would help him gain powerful influence in Syria, which would enable him to have an active say in Mediterranean politics. Although Demetrius was taken prisoner, the plan never saw fruition. Its fulfillment was blocked by internal problems in the monarchy, as ca. 92 BCE Mithradates was challenged by the usurper Gotarzes, who had probably gained control over the empire's eastern satrapies, supported by local rich and influential aristocratic families, and over a large part of Mesopotamia. However, civil war was prevented by the king's natural death.

After Mithradates II's death, the Parthian state found itself faced with a political crisis that lasted for more than ten years. It resulted in a weakening of central authority, territorial losses to the neighbors, and a decline in Parthia's international significance. Such domestic troubles in the Arsacid domain were grist for the mill of King Tigranes of Armenia, who quickly amassed vast lands under his scepter. His major successes included capture from Parthia of a strategic region in Armenia occupied years before by Mithradates II, subjugation of some Parthian-held areas in northern Mesopotamia, and ascent to the Seleucid throne. The last success came his way without much effort through support from local elites, tired from the decades-long struggle for the crown between members of Syria's ruling family. The crisis situation was only overcome by Sinatruces (or Sanatruces), who ascended to the Arsacid throne ca. 88/87 BCE.

Soon after the passing of Mithradates II, the Parthian state found itself bordering a vast theater of war begun in 74 BCE and, at its height, spreading into parts of Asia Minor, the Caucasus, Armenia, and Syria. The hostilities were triggered by a conflict between Mithradates VI Eupator, king of Pontus, and Rome. Although Mithradates VI attempted to draw the Parthians into the war, Sinatruces insisted on maintaining neutrality. His son and successor Phraates III (ca. 71/70–58/57 BCE) acted likewise, first in response to an invitation to join an anti-Roman coalition envisaged by Mithradates VI and Tigranes, and again in 69 BCE to demands from the Roman commander Lucullus to lend him support in his campaign against both

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rulers. It seems that Phraates III's consistent policies brought the Parthians some gains as Lucullus agreed to recognize the Euphrates as a line of division of the respective states' spheres of influence. The same was confirmed by Cn. Pompeius (Pompey), from 66 BCE Lucullus's successor, in the hope that it would help him secure the support of Phraates or at least prevent his joining the anti-Roman alliance, whose conclusion was again suggested to Phraates by Mithradates VI. Pompey's efforts failed to produce the desired result as the Parthian king kept aloof from the war being fought, concentrating on the conflict in Armenia between Tigranes and his son Tigranes the Younger. Although the younger challenger whom he supported lost his struggle for the throne, Phraates succeeded in recovering some Parthian lands captured years before by the king of Armenia. Interference in Armenian affairs led to tensions in Phraates III's relations with Pompey, but an all-out conflict with Rome was prevented. As an unexpected outcome of Pompey's policies toward the kings of Armenia and Parthia, the latter two made peace in 64 BCE.

Phraates III's reign was terminated by a coup staged in 58/57 BCE by his sons, Orodes II and Mithradates III. Conflicts between the two continued until ca. 54/53 BCE. The final victor was Orodes, who immediately found himself having to defend his state from an unexpected assault by the Roman governor of Syria, M. Licinius Crassus. The attack was caused purely by the Roman's personal ambitions and hopes of an easy victory with abundant spoils. Encouraged by his good fortune in 54 BCE, in the following year Crassus launched a massive campaign that ended at Carrhae in a rout of his army and his own death. Given the grave internal problems caused by struggles with aristocratic opposition, Orodes II could not immediately enjoy all the fruits of his victory. He succeeded only in subordinating king Artavasdes II of Armenia, earlier an ally of Crassus, and thus strengthening Parthian influence in that country. Only in 51 BCE did his armies enter Syria. Still, with the opposition leaders scheming with the Romans, Orodes was forced to withdraw from there in 50 BCE. Although the domestic situation prevented the king for many years from pursuing an active external policy, he would not let pass an opportunity to interfere in Roman affairs once that country found itself facing civil war. He decided to lend an armed hand to the killers of the Roman dictator Julius Caesar, who had gained control over Asia Minor and Syria. The political chaos that followed their defeat led Orodes again to attack Roman possessions in the East. In 40 BCE, a Parthian corps under Q. Aetius Labienus, a Roman republican who had defected to Orodes, entered Anatolia; another, led by Pacorus, son of Orodes, invaded Syria. A Roman counter-offensive was launched soon afterwards by Mark Antony, obliterating Parthian successes. In 39 BCE, pressure from Roman troops forced Labienus out of Asia Minor. Finally, defeat at Gindaros in 38 BCE, in which Pacorus was killed, made the Parthians evacuate all their forces from Syria. On the death of his beloved son, Orodes II gave himself to mourning, relinquishing power to another son, Phraates IV.

Phraates IV (38–3/2 BCE), probably fearing for the security of his position, upon ascending to the throne performed an unprecedented crackdown on actual and potential opponents. The measure had the opposite of the desired effect. Many aristocrats hostile to Phraates fled to Roman territory, from where, with Roman support,

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they began a successful struggle with the king. This situation, posing a danger to Phraates as it was combined with an expedition against Parthia being prepared by Mark Antony, made the king enter into negotiations with opposition leaders. These were successful, and the dangerous émigrés returned home. Despite losing such allies, Mark Antony persisted in his plan and in 36 BCE struck at Media Atropatene, the geographical position of which facilitated attack on Parthian territory. However, cooperation between king Artavasdes of Media and Phraates IV led to a Roman defeat. A contributing factor was the neutrality in the conflict of king Artavasdes II of Armenia. In retribution, Mark Antony overran Armenia in 34 BCE, taking captive the whole royal family except Artavasdes II's son Artaxes, who found refuge at the Parthian court. Mark Antony's preparations for war with Octavian left Phraates more freedom of action. In 33 BCE he attacked Media Atropatene, whose ruler, after a short friendship with the king of Parthia, had made an alliance with Mark Antony, and conquered it in 32 BCE. As his next goal, Phraates set his sights on Armenia, where he put on the throne the son of Artavasdes II, Artaxes II.

Such successes helped to strengthen Parthian influence in areas of great strategic significance for Parthian security, but they did little to pacify internal strife. In 31 BCE, Phraates IV was challenged by Tiridates I, a usurper backed by some of the aristocracy, who took years of fighting to defeat and drive off. Tiridates took one of the king's sons with him, which made it easier for him to find refuge on Roman territory. Phraates demanded that the Romans release the son and extradite Tiridates, but years of diplomatic efforts only resulted in the return of the son. Octavian, having just defeated Mark Antony at Actium in 31 BCE, started systematic action to restore Roman control over Armenia and neighboring lands. Yet it did not significantly affect the relations between Rome and the Parthian state. Change only occurred in 20 BCE, when, faced with serious trouble at home and military pressure from Rome, Phraates decided to make some concessions: he returned some Roman legionary standards that the Parthians had captured in battle at Carrhae and released all Roman prisoners of war. This decision by the Parthian king was seen by some among the Armenian aristocracy as a sign of his weakness and led them to murder Artaxes II and turn to Rome for help in the enthronement of another monarch. These events opened a long period of fighting between Rome and the Arsacids for influence in Armenia, to be concluded in 1 CE, during the reign of Phraataces (Phraates V) (3/2 BCE–2 CE), the son of Phraates IV. In the same year, a meeting was held between Gaius Caesar, the adoptive son of the Roman emperor, and the king of Parthia. In its aftermath, Rome recognized the Parthian state as an equal partner and, more importantly, stopped questioning Phraataces' right to the crown in return for his giving up his claims to Armenia as well as his demands that the Romans return his brothers who had been living from 10/9 BCE with their families in Rome, where they had been sent by Phraates IV to prevent a dynastic conflict in the Arsacid family.

Consent to Roman hegemony in Armenia resulted from Phraataces' precarious position in the country. The Roman recognition of his right to the crown, much needed to confront his domestic opposition, did not protect him from loss of power.

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In 4 CE, a group of aristocrats put on the throne Orodes III, who, however, was murdered in 6 CE. On his death, some Parthian aristocrats requested the Roman emperor Augustus (27 BCE–14 CE) to consent to hand the crown to the son of Phraates IV, Vonones, who was living in Rome. The new ruler quickly alienated his subjects, one important reason being his having become Romanized. This presented an opportunity to Artabanus II, a member of a side line of the Arsacids, who, after years of fighting Vonones and his supporters, succeeded in ca. 11/12 in achieving victory. The defeated rival took shelter in Armenia and soon became its king. An attempt by Artabanus II to replace him with his own son caused immediate reaction from Rome, which could tolerate Vonones but not the rise to power in Armenia of an Arsacid it considered a serious threat to its interests. To safeguard those, Emperor Tiberius (14–37 CE) sent to the east his stepson Germanicus in 18. His mission met with no opposition from the Parthians and concluded in the enthronement in Armenia of Rome's protégé, Artaxias III. Since Rome had desisted in supporting Vonones, Artabanus accepted the emergent situation in Armenia. To confirm the friendly relations between the two states, Germanicus and Artabanus met on an island in the Euphrates in 18 CE. Once the Parthian king had accepted the situation in Armenia, he was free to concentrate on his monarchy's internal affairs. He took steps to reinforce Arsacid positions in vassal lands, subordinate some lands in eastern Iran, and strengthen the king's authority. The success of this policy helped define his political program, which not only guided his own actions but later became a road sign for his successors. Called the neo-Iranian program, it had as its guiding idea a claim of the Arsacids on the legal heritage of the Achaemenids and their consequent right to lands once belonging to the Persian Empire.

In 35, more than ten years of peace between Parthia and Rome came to an end when after the heirless death of Artaxias III, Artabanus II made an attempt to put his own son on the Armenian throne. The rationale behind the move was to implement the program of Achaemenid imperial restoration. To stop the king, Tiberius decided to lend his ear to the requests of aristocrats opposed to Artabanus and sent on his way to Parthia another of Phraates IV's sons, also named Phraates. After his unexpected death in Syria, the emperor dispatched Tiridates, a grandson of Phraates IV, who succeeded in conquering a large part of the country and the capital at Ctesiphon. The situation in Armenia, already difficult for Artabanus, was further complicated as king Mithradates of Caucasian Iberia joined in the struggle for its throne. Despite that, in 36, with ample help from a group of loyal aristocrats, Artabanus forced Tiridates to withdraw. In the spring of 37, the Parthian king met with the then governor of Syria, L. Vitellius, and the two men made some important agreements whereby Artabanus resigned from further struggle for Armenia, Rome recognized the Euphrates as the border between the two empires, and the Parthian monarch's rule was vindicated as legal. While relations with Rome improved dramatically, Artabanus still faced serious domestic problems. One of them was the rebellion of Seleucia on the Tigris which broke out in 36 (his power over the city was not reasserted until 42); another was unrest in Parthian-controlled Adiabene. Although the time of Artabanus II was not peaceful, his reign helped strengthen the state.

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With the death of Artabanus II, disturbances ensued and continued for over ten years, involving pretenders to the throne supported by various aristocratic groups. His son and successor, Vardanes I (ca. 39–45 CE) was not able to settle them. One of those involved pretenders was Rome-based Meherdates, the son of Vonones, who arrived in Parthia in 48. This stage of political strife was only concluded when Vologases I ascended to the throne (ca. 51–78/79 CE). It seems that from the start of his reign Vologases tried with consistency to implement the political program defined by Artabanus II. This is best exemplified by his attempts to strengthen the Arsacid position in lands within the Parthian sphere of influence by placing his own brothers on the respective thrones. The first such decision was to put Pacorus in power in Media Atropatene; the second, much more significant politically, was the enthronement of Tiridates in Armenia in 53. Vologases must have anticipated possible confrontation arising from this step, and he was determined to risk it. A Roman response came with Nero (54–68 CE) on the throne. Such as the conflict was, it favored the Parthian king until unexpected difficulties arose: the usurpation in 54/55 of his own son Vardanes and—a little later—disturbances in Hyrcania. These emergencies forced Vologases to recall his troops from Armenia, allowing the Romans to occupy it and install their own favorite on its throne. Once he settled the domestic disruption, Vologases rejoined the war for Armenia. Its turning point proved to be the Parthian victory over the Romans at Rhandeia in 62. The event brought the warring sides to the negotiating table, where they concluded in the following year a mutually satisfactory agreement on Armenia: the Parthian king obtained the right to appoint a candidate for the Armenian crown, while the Roman emperor enjoyed the privilege of crowning him. While this meant that formally Rome decided the holder of the Armenian crown, in reality it amounted to Rome surrendering Armenia to Arsacid political influence.

Once he put his Armenian affairs in order, Vologases could concentrate on internal problems. His attention was focused on reestablishing a real authority in southern Mesopotamia and neighboring Susiana and Elymais. While these lands were formally subordinated to the Parthian king, their leaders wasted no opportunity to loosen the ties that constricted them and even attempted to shake their dependence altogether. We may surmise that in ca. 73 Vologases regained seniority over Characene, as is suggested by an interruption, beginning that year and lasting decades, in its coinage. Soon afterward he restored his influence in Susiana and Elymais as well as in Persis. Under the reign of Vologases and that of his successor, Pacorus II, Parthian interest grew in the lands of Choresmia, Bactria, and the Hindu Kush. The presence of Parthian elements in the coinage of various political centers in those lands attests to the influences both rulers had in the area. Nor was Vologases I's activity restricted to political action. He put much effort into the building of strategically located fortresses and the founding of new cities. This proved beneficial to the whole state, as Parthian control over all of Mesopotamia afforded favorable conditions for trade and communication between the Mediterranean and the Orient, broadly understood. Such control over the Persian Gulf area helped navigation and exchange reaching as far as the Indian Peninsula. Guarantees of security on

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land routes across Iran and Central Asia intensified relations with China and assured Parthia a monopoly on trade with that country. Such contacts also concerned an alliance against the ever more powerful ruler of the Kushan kingdom. Involvement in the north and east notwithstanding, Parthian-Roman relations continued undiminished later in Vologases' reign. The anti-Roman insurrection in Judea (66–70 CE) and later struggles between pretenders to the Roman throne in 68–69 were situations that the Parthian ruler tried, without much success, to use to his own advantage. Attempted interference in Rome's internal affairs caused tensions in mutual relations. These intensified when Vespasian (69–79 CE) became emperor. Rome's distrust for its eastern neighbor was demonstrated as he began a military buildup along the joint border on the Euphrates, continued by his sons Titus (79–81) and Domitian (81–96).

Vologases I's policies were continued by his son, Pacorus II (ca. 78–ca. 110), who probably had gained experience as a coruler at his father's side. He, too, late in his reign, shared his power with his son, Vologases III (ca. 110–147). Late in Pacorus II's and early in Vologases III's reigns, the usurper Osroes I made his presence felt. Most probably a native of Elymais, he succeeded in taking over a significant portion of the Parthian state, including a large chunk of Mesopotamia. His decisions regarding the holder of the Armenian throne violated the Rhandeia treaty and presented a pretext to Trajan (98–117) to launch an expedition against the Arsacid state in 113. Although the Romans scored some military successes (they captured Ctesiphon and reached the Persian Gulf), these lacked permanence. Having briefly taken the initiative in Armenian affairs and having installed on the Arsacid throne a candidate after their own hearts, they lost some of their gains even before Trajan's death and the remnant soon afterward, as his successor Hadrian (117–134) gave them up. Yet Osroes I's challenge to Parthia's legal authority did not disappear without trace. In unknown circumstances, Vologases III recognized his authority over the territories under his control, probably for the price of Osroes I's allegiance to the Parthian king. This solution would assure the Parthian state decades of relative domestic peace and later bring Osroes' descendants the Arsacid crown. The peace greatly helped further development of trade links between the Mediterranean and the East (confirmed by numerous testimonies), with a particular role played in this by Palmyra in the second century CE. During the reign of Vologases III, Parthian-Roman relations were mostly satisfactory, though not without some tensions. Two meetings of Vologases and Hadrian in 123 and 129 did not bring about major changes. For Parthia, much more important at the time were events in other areas of its empire. In the Caucasus, tensions mounted, caused by the activities of Pharasmanes, king of Iberia, who was instrumental in an invasion of the nomadic Alans into Parthian lands in ca. 135. The growth and expansion of the Kushan kingdom forced the Parthians to pursue more vigorous political and military policies in the east to strengthen their position there.

A landmark in the reign of Vologases IV (147–191/192) was a restoration, one more time, about 150/151, of Parthian supremacy over Characene, which had been outside the Arsacid orbit of influence since Trajan's expedition. With the amount of

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trade going though that land, its independence was a loss of much revenue to the Parthians. In 161, Vologases unexpectedly launched a war on Rome. It was the first conflict between the two states in which the attackers were the Parthians. Its beginning coincided with the ascent to the Roman throne of Marcus Aurelius (161–179). The scenario of events suggests that Vologases meant to capture Armenia and Syria simultaneously. On the Armenian throne he put his own appointee, Pacorus, while an unexpected assault on Syria enabled him to defeat the Roman troops stationed there. Confidence in his own superiority prompted Vologases to reject a Roman peace proposal in 162. Despite their dire position early in 163, the Romans under Lucius Verus launched a counteroffensive and regained control over Armenia later in the same year. In 164, the Parthians lost Syria for good. Roman troops commanded by Avidius Cassius moved along the Euphrates to capture Dura-Europos. The success was of great significance to the Romans, as it caused many vassal rulers to leave the side of Vologases and put the initiative in Roman hands. In late 165 or early 166, Avidius Cassius subjugated Seleucia on the Tigris, and soon afterward Ctesiphon. Probably at more or less the same time, other Roman troops entered Adiabene and Media. The Romans' Mesopotamian campaign concluded unexpectedly, for they were forced to withdraw in spring 166 because of heavy casualties inflicted on them by a plague that had broken out in Seleucia. Soon afterwards, the war terminated completely. As its result, Vologases IV lost to Rome a vast portion of his lands in northern Mesopotamia. Despite this setback, he would not stop struggling for influence in Armenia, yet with no lasting success. A lost war with Rome helped pacify relations between the two states, but a formal settlement of disputes did not come about until probably 176.

Renewed tensions between the two empires occurred under Vologases V (191/192–ca. 208). They were sparked off by the Parthian ruler taking the side of Pescennius Niger against Septimius Severus during a civil war in Rome (192–193) and interference in the internal affairs of Rome's vassal states in northern Mesopotamia (Adiabene, Osroene). In revenge, Septimius Severus (193–211), who had defeated other pretenders to the imperial purple, invaded northern Mesopotamia in 195 and transformed Osroene into a Roman province, thus putting an end to Parthian attempts to uphold their influence in the area. Actual combat with the Parthians took placed during a second expedition that Septimius Severus conducted in 198. He succeeded in reaching as far as Ctesiphon, but, as in the first expedition, his attempt to capture Hatra failed despite a long siege. The peace that concluded the hostilities reasserted Roman dominance in northern Mesopotamia and Armenia.

The mutual peace between Parthia and Rome was breached by the son and successor of Septimius Severus, Caracalla (211–217). He took advantage of internal conflicts in the Arsacid empire in the first years of Vologases VI's rule (ca. 208–221/22), caused by claims to the throne by the latter's younger brother, Artabanus IV, who had gained control over much of the country, including Media and Susiana. Confusion in the Parthian empire caused by its virtual split between two brothers led Caracalla to try to subjugate Armenia, an attempt that failed because of an anti-Roman insurrection. Nor did a simple continuation of his father's policy, in hopes

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of further successes, bring desired results. The excuse for the attack was claimed to be an escape to Parthia of two Roman subjects, but their handing over by Vologases VI left Caracalla without a pretext to declare war. An open conflict only came about following the Roman emperor's futile wooing of Artabanus IV's daughter. Whatever armed inroads the Romans made into Parthia did not bring Caracalla meaningful victories, as the Parthians avoided serious engagement. The expedition was terminated by the emperor's unexpected death in April 217, which came at a highly unfavorable moment for the Romans. A Parthian counteroffensive defeated them in the battle of Nisibis. In this situation, Macrinus, the emperor's successor, who had been instrumental in his death, sought immediate peace talks. In a treaty signed in 218, Macrinus pledged to pay the Parthians liberal compensation for the damage done by the Roman incursion and not to interfere in Armenian affairs. The accord also confirmed the existing border between the two states. The peace of 218 is the last known event in the history of Parthian-Roman relations.

Successful though the war with Rome was, it did not prevent Parthia's internal crisis, which soon led to its downfall. The crisis started in vassal rebellions that the Parthian monarchs were not able to deal with. Especially dangerous was the revolt of Ardashir, the ruler of Persis. No sooner had he risen to power in ca. 220 than he began vigorously to spread his influence into neighboring areas. He also secured the support of the Parthian vassal rulers of Media and Adiabene, as well as tribal chieftains, which enabled the coalition to overrun all of Mesopotamia except Hatra. At first, Artabanus IV thought little of the adversary and bided his time before he took steps against him. These were concluded by the king's death and Parthian defeat in a battle fought in September 224. By 226, Ardashir held control over Ctesiphon, previously belonging to Vologases VI. It was probably the capture of the Parthian capital that allowed him to take the title of "King of Kings." It seems that Vologases VI stayed in power for a short period after that, since we know of coins with his name dating from 228. However, they are the last piece of evidence for the existence of the Arsacid state. In ca. 230, power over the lands that had made up the Parthian Empire was in Ardashir's hands. His rule opened a new, four-hundred-year-long chapter in the history of ancient Iran under the Sasanian dynasty.

The Parthian monarchy

From the time of Arsaces I, the Parthian state was an absolute inherited monarchy with a traditional principle of passing down the rule to the eldest son of the ruling monarch; there was also a tradition of the Parthian king appointing his sons as corulers. This principle of succession was not, however, always strictly adhered to, as a ruler could name as his successor his brother, bypassing his own offspring. One reason for the numerous dynastic conflicts and usurpations was certainly the Arsacid practice of polygamy. By practicing dynastic unions and placing members

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of their family on the thrones of dependent states, the Arsacids greatly broadened and strengthened their influence. Despite Roman countermeasures, supported by groups of native aristocrats, they proved especially well established in Armenia, where descendants of the Arsacids ruled as late as the fourth century CE.

At least as early as the second century BCE, the Arsacids began to include in their dynastic ideology clear signs stressing their links with the tradition of the Achaemenids. These included a fictitious genealogical claim showing Arsaces I and his brother as descendants of the Persian king Artaxerxes, a legendary account of how Arsaces I and his brother rose to power (through a conspiracy made up of them and five other members, which, in replicating the circumstances and the number of participants, echoed the Persian king Darius's ascent to power), a comparison of Arsaces to Cyrus, and the use of Achaemenid titulature—starting from Mithradates I, Parthian kings sporadically, and from Mithradates II regularly, used the title "King of Kings." Intimately connected with this tradition is the distinct political program defined under Artabanus II (although some of its tenets appeared in Arsacid propaganda much earlier) in which that ruler made claims to territories once part of the Achaemenid Empire. Such claims probably applied not only to their possessions in Asia Minor and the Middle East but to all that at one time or another had found themselves under the scepter of the kings of Persia, including those in Central Asia and on the Indian frontier. The significance of the program is not to be underestimated, for it certainly determined Parthian policies toward its neighbors for a considerable period of time. References to Iranian tradition could be seen also in other spheres of life, one example being attempts to accentuate the role of Iranian-originated Zoroastrianism in the state's religious life. The same purpose was probably served by introduction of Parthian inscriptions next to Greek on coins in the time of Vologases I. Unquestionably, the Iranism propagated by the Arsacids stemmed from a need to legitimize their rule and was an important tool in the ideological integration of the empire they built.

An important attribute of the power of the Parthian monarchs was their royal headgear. Early Parthian rulers wore a cap called a *bashlyk* tied with a diadem, fashioned after the headgear proper for Achaemenid-period satraps. From Mithradates I to the early years of Mithradates II's reign, the symbol of royal authority was a diadem. Later, Mithradates II began using a tiara derived from the Median tradition. It was also worn by his successors, and at a later time, as vassal thrones were occupied by members of the Arsacid dynasty, the privilege was extended to dependent rulers. An important political symbol of Parthian kingship was the golden throne of the Arsacids. Looted by the Romans from Ctesiphon during Trajan's expedition, it was never returned, despite Vologases III's appeals to Hadrian.

Institutions of the Arsacid monarchy exhibit many Greek traits borrowed from the Hellenistic tradition, which, however, left only a limited stamp on it. Therefore, despite occasionally voiced opinions that it was a barbarized form of a Hellenistic monarchy, it should be seen primarily as a typical Oriental monarchy.

An important role in shaping Arsacid royal tradition and ideology was played by several cities with which they were associated throughout their history. The first such

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center was Asaak (Astauene), established by Arsaces I, which served as the Arsacid royal necropolis. The same ruler was connected with the origins of New Nisa, a royal residence that enjoyed the special protection of successive rulers as the Arsacid birthplace up to the first century BCE. At later stages, the functions of a capital city were also served by Hecatompylos, Ecbatana, Rhagae, Babylon, and Ctesiphon.

Institutions and Organization of the Arsacid Empire

A detailed scrutiny of the internal structure of the Parthian state is not possible. The reason is the limited number of historical sources and the fact that not all periods in Parthia's centuries-long history are covered in the sources that are available. As a further hindrance, those structures varied in time as the Arsacid state kept expanding. A vast empire necessitated an extended territorial administration. Its largest unit was the satrapy, which Roman authors called *regnum*. In the first century CE, Parthia was divided into eighteen satrapies, of which eleven, lying to the east of Armenia and the Caspian Sea, were called "upper" and the remaining seven "lower." Their shape and extent principally reflected that of each new land conquered by the Arsacids in the course of their history. Source information suggests that typically they used for their own administrative purposes any organizational structures already existing in captured territories. In this respect, the Arsacids pursued a policy resembling that of the Seleucids, who built their administration on Achaemenid structures. Maintaining a continuity of administrative tradition and practice as preexisting in a given area and avoiding rapid changes facilitated its integration with the empire. For the same reason, Parthian rulers sometimes appointed members of local elites as officials in newly conquered lands. Rather than suggest their weak grasp of local affairs, such a policy was a deliberate and efficient method of winning the loyalties of new subjects, especially in lands where ancient traditions needed to be respected and upheld. An important element of this policy was respecting the privileges of particular social groups, especially those that helped shape the opinions and attitudes of others. This approach is exemplified by Parthian respect for the rights of priests and the autonomy of temples in Babylonia.

A somewhat different policy was pursued by Parthian rulers toward Greek cities founded by the Seleucids, under whom such settlements enjoyed considerable autonomy. This did not radically change under the Arsacids, although the history of Seleucia on the Tigris suggests that such autonomy was often the source of tensions and serious conflicts with Parthian rulers trying to restrain it. Their purpose was easier to achieve in smaller cities. As a result, they were made increasingly dependent on the king's local officials, whose authority enabled them to interfere in cities' internal affairs, even down to elections of city administrators. As for the status of cities established by the Arsacids themselves, no evidence is available.

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Parthian kings presided over a considerable body of specialized officials and functionaries of various levels dealing with the collection of duties and taxes and supervising local communities and administrative units. It should be noted that while provincial administration was extensive, central government was scant.

Parthian kings also had a say in the course of affairs in vassal states. Some dependent rulers voluntarily recognized Arsacid supremacy, possible reasons being dynastic, cultural, and religious links. Such lesser kings, often from local families, possessed a relatively large freedom of movement and autonomy, including the right to mint their own coin (Adiabene, Osroene). Not infrequently, however, some rulers of lands in the Parthian sphere of influence (Elymais, Characene) were made to recognize Arsacid domination by force. This method did not always bring lasting political effects. Weakness exhibited by some Parthian kings and internal crises that rocked the Arsacid empire provided encouragement to local leaders to seek political independence time and time again. Some of these attempts led to more or less long-lived success. Yet despite strong centrifugal tendencies, the Parthian state ultimately succeeded in maintaining unity even at the most precarious junctures of its history.

Our knowledge of the Parthian army is still highly limited, as we have no detailed records of its numbers and organization. We may only suppose that at least in some satrapies—those most vulnerable to unrest or aggression by a neighbor, or of vital importance for other reasons—it employed a military administration fashioned after Seleucid solutions, headed by a high-ranking officer commanding a number of troops and resorting to local draft whenever need arose.

When the Arsacids took to arms in offensive or defensive action, they mobilized an army centered on units supplied by grand aristocratic families. Its thrusting force depended mainly on cavalry composed of two historically well-documented formations, the *cataphractari*, or heavily armored cavalry, and mounted archers whose mobility and long-range combat capability made them formidable opponents, as the Romans found out to their chagrin in the battle of Carrhae. Infantry was of much lesser use on the vast plains of Mesopotamia, Iran, and Central Asia, and accordingly it played a secondary role in the Parthian military, probably mostly confined to defense of fortresses.

Mercenary forces served a marginal function in the Parthian army. While the Arsacids often resorted to the deployment of such troops, they did so only in particularly dire circumstances when their own forces proved insufficient to defend themselves, or if they met with a refusal from a vassal. In offensive operations, however, mercenaries played no part. On occasion, mutinies erupting in mercenary ranks occasioned serious difficulties.

Society

A picture of the complex social relations in the multicultural and multiethnic society of the Arsacid Empire is difficult to reconstruct for want of a sufficient number of sources covering this subject. Another serious obstacle is the ambiguity, even

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contradiction, of notions applied by antique authors with reference to the Parthian society. The terms they use are more fitting for the type of relations familiar to them from Rome than descriptive of Parthian society, which was different in many respects.

As the period of great expansion had reached its end, the Arsacid Empire probably developed a model of social relations that was to some extent common to all its lands as it reflected the outcome of all the Parthian conquests, because the kings, at the expense of the vanquished, generously rewarded all those that had contributed to their successes. This policy helped not only to reinforce Parthian rule but to raise the prestige of Parthian higher social orders. Their privileged status led to the growth of several powerful and extremely rich aristocratic clans who held sway in their respective lands and exerted potent influence on the life of the country and its monarchs. The best known families include Suren, connected with Sistan; Karin, based in Media; and Gev, dominating in Hyrcania. Members of these families enjoyed a guaranteed inherited place of significance at the king's side. As an exceptional honor this might include, for example, the privilege of placing the tiara on a newly crowned monarch's head. With the passage of time, representatives of grand families began to play a decisive role in feuds and struggles between pretenders to the Arsacid crown and in conflicts between the rulers and aristocracy. Out of their number came advisors, military commanders, and the highest officers of state. Upon being commissioned as a commander, an aristocrat thus honored was obliged to supply and organize an army whose core were usually soldiers recruited from his vassals and subjects.

The close ties between individual grand families and the lands in which their domains lay largely affected their political choices. This phenomenon became manifest from the first century BCE, for then the first open conflicts occurred between Parthian rulers and aristocrats. They were born out of the ambitions of some aristocrats to usurp power, out of attempts by Orodes II, Phraates IV, and others to suppress political opposition and to limit the vast privileges the aristocracy enjoyed. In such confrontations, some groups among the aristocracy, those associated with western, Hellenized lands in the Parthian Empire, sought to obtain the support of Rome. Another example of political strife is visible in uprisings by clans linked with Iran and eastern satrapies motivated by an anxiety to maintain the national character of the monarchy against the successive sons of Phraates IV on the Arsacid throne who had returned to the fatherland after a prolonged stay in Rome, where they had become so enamored of the charms of Roman culture as to abandon completely the ways of their predecessors. It was no accident that the Iranism of the Arsacids found the greatest resonance and support among the aristocracies of the eastern, or "upper," satrapies. Their cultivation of Iranian customs was an important element in their aristocratic ethos.

Of other groups in the Parthian society, their composition, rights, and obligations, we know very little. It is assumed that native inhabitants of Parthia, who made up the lower social orders, still stood higher in the social hierarchy than their equiva-

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lents in Parthian-conquered lands. The subjects' legal status defined the type of military formation in which they served. Members of the higher orders joined the *cataphractari*, the heavy cavalry. Their vassals fought as mounted archers, a formation highly effective on the battlefield. Although slaves must have constituted a large social group, little can be discerned about their place and role in the Parthian society.

Apart from information concerning the social organization of the Parthians themselves, sources supply considerable data on two ethnic groups that played a prominent part in the empire's life. One was the Greek population that found itself under the scepter of the Arsacids as they conquered territories previously included in the Seleucid state; the other was Jews. Among the Parthian Greeks, the largest group consisted of the descendants of Greeks and Macedonians settled in the east from the time of Alexander the Great's expedition. Other than these, there were also all those who had become Hellenized and identified with Greek culture and tradition. In the Parthian empire, the Greek population numbered at least several hundred thousand. Owing to its size and sense of cultural identity, it was an especially significant minority. Its geographical spread across the empire's territory was uneven. Its largest centers were located in lands in which settlement under the Seleucids had been the strongest and in highly urbanized areas. Such regions especially included Media, Mesopotamia, and Susiana.

The largest population center and the greatest Greek city was Seleucia on the Tigris, the third largest city of the ancient world, numbering 600,000 inhabitants at its peak. Although not all inhabitants were of that nationality, a concentration of power in the city made the Greeks the dominant force culturally and politically. Thanks to this, Seleucia retained its Greek character until the collapse of the Parthian state. Their monopoly of power the Greeks owed to the autonomy that the city obtained from the Seleucids and preserved under the Arsacids. Mithradates I, shortly after capturing the city in 141 BCE, not only confirmed earlier charters but granted the city new ones. Yet despite that, a number of times in the following century Seleucia manifested its independence by taking the side of various pretenders to the throne, and Vardanes I (ca. 39–45 CE) subdued it in 42 only after more than six years of siege. A sign of the city's exceptional legal status was its right to issue its own coinage.

In smaller centers, the situation of the Greek populace was also advantageous, since in rivalries between various groups it could effectively defend its privileged position. That the Arsacids fully recognized its importance and sought to curry its favor is best exemplified by Mithradates I's inclusion in his official royal titulature of the honorific title *Philhellên*; in his wake, many of his successors did the same. Although the real function of this title is still debated by researchers, it is difficult to accept the view that its adoption by Parthian kings was purely a propaganda stunt; some Arsacids did not use it at all, while others included it in their titulature years after ascending to the throne. Another sign of Greek importance is seen on Parthian coins bearing legends in their language. Yet despite such favorable Arsacid attitudes and cooperative spirit, Greeks were slow to discard their bias against a nation they regarded as full of barbarians. Such attitudes caused tensions that sometimes culminated in bloody conflicts.

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One reason Parthian kings were forced to humor Greeks was their vital role in the empire's economy. At the same time, realizing the excessive preponderance of large Greek cities in their state, the Arsacids made renewed attempts to curb their autonomy. Their interference in the municipal autonomy of Seleucia brought limited results, which made them seek other courses of action. When attempts to limit Seleucia's privileges failed, Parthian kings began founding other cities meant to compete with it and diminish its economic position. It was with such a scheme in mind that Vologases I set up the city of Vologesias. Such foundations, located along Mesopotamia's main trade routes, were intended to capture as great a share of business as possible, to the detriment of Seleucia. Source records from the first and second centuries CE confirm that the Arsacids were largely successful in achieving their purpose. Seleucia on the Tigris was taken a further few pegs down by the Romans, who three times in the second century CE captured and plundered it, inflicting heavy damage to its material substance and debilitating the Greeks to the advantage of the Oriental element.

Sources have little to say about the place of Jews in the Arsacid Empire. Jewish subjects of Parthian kings were the descendants of Judeans deported to Mesopotamia in 587 BCE. Although Persian rulers allowed them to return to their native land, a considerable group decided to stay in the new country. As to the size of the Jewish population of the Arsacid Empire, it is clear that they were far less numerous than Parthian Greeks. Jews, like Greeks, inhabited urban as well as rural areas. Rivalries for rights in the cities sometimes led the two nationalities to conflict. Any such tensions were skillfully taken advantage of by the Parthian authorities, who, in showing favor to the Jews, hoped for their support in clashes with other ethnic minorities, especially with the Greeks. There were also other, political reasons that the Jews readily cooperated with the Arsacids. They perceived them as the only power capable of standing against Rome, and pinned on Parthia their hopes of regaining the independent statehood they lost in 63 BCE when Rome annexed Syria, subordinating Judea in the process. This attitude explains why Jews rose against Rome during Trajan's campaign, largely contributing to its failure.

In return for their loyalty, the Jewish population obtained the right to have a government of its own. Moreover, the Arsacids readily offered shelter to Jews fleeing Roman rule. Such favorable attitudes were conducive to the growth of the Jewish community. Thus, after the Romans demolished the temple at Jerusalem in 70 CE, Parthian Mesopotamia became an important center of Judaic tradition.

Culture

Any attempt to characterize the Parthian culture encounters numerous problems, arising out of the variety of elements that constituted it and also from the fact that cultural phenomena in respective lands in the Arsacid Empire are known in varying

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degrees. For many years, the main problem that caused disputes among scholars was defining the characteristics of Parthian art. Such a difficulty arose because attempts at a definition were made based primarily on relics discovered outside the native Parthian areas in centers that were merely in the Parthian orbit of influence, Palmyra, Dura-Europos, Hatra, and Assur. Based on such finds, the Parthian art was declared to be spiritualist, hieratic, linear, verist, and frontal. Discoveries at Old and New Nisa, as well as in Anatolia, Central Asia, Iran, and Afghanistan, obliged scholars to revise some earlier opinions. More important than strictly formal criteria, it became necessary to define the principal components of this art. Regarding it from this angle, it became possible to indicate at least three major ones: Greek (Hellenistic), Iranian derived from Achaemenid traditions, and Iranian associated with the world of nomads from which the Parthians' ancestors, the Parni, had descended. Still, significant regional differences were observed in the proportions in which these constituents occurred. Depending on which of them prevailed in a given area, it was accentuated in the style and character of works created there.

The most outstanding relicts of Parthian art known today come from excavations at Old and New Nisa, where archeologists have discovered not only exceptionally valuable works of art (ivory rhytons, marble sculptures, terracotta statues, richly decorated metal utensils) but also imposing remains of palatial and residential architecture. Research conducted in Turkmenistan, ancient Hyrcania, and Khuzistan has revealed many remains of Parthian religious and residential architecture, especially in small towns and medium-sized cities, and also in rural settlements. The temples of Hatra occupy a place all their own among Parthia's historical monuments.

Rock reliefs, found mainly in Elymais, are deemed characteristic of Parthian art. Dating back to Achaemenid traditions, they are considered a precious historical source, as figures are usually accompanied by inscriptions. Representative examples of Parthian sculpture are statues of Hatra and a metal figure of a ruler found at Shami.

Just as material culture offered rich variety, so did forms of intellectual life. Sources permit us to state that Arsacid tolerance enabled respective ethnic groups under their rule to freely develop their cultures. Greeks inhabiting Babylon late in the second century BCE lived according to native social, cultural, and religious traditions; they frequented the theater and the gymnasium, met at the agora, and experienced the enthusiasms of sports events. They could listen to the philosophical lectures of the stoic Archedemus in his own school. Greek men of letters under the Arsacid scepter included the geographer Isidore of Charax and historians Agathocles of Babylon and Apollodorus of Artemita. Nor did Greek culture benefit Greeks alone. Classical Greek literature was known and perused at the Arsacid court as well. The Greek language was among the most widely used in the Parthian empire, including at the royal chancery.

One phenomenon that well illustrates the cultural wealth of the Arsacid state was the functioning of old religious centers in Babylonia. They were exceptional not so much in the vitality of the cultic practices performed in them to the land's deities

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as in astronomical diaries recorded in cuneiform writing, uninterrupted from the creation of the Neo-Babylonian state. The last preserved records come from the first century BCE.

What with local differences and the variety of its forms, content, and inspirations, Parthian culture evades any attempts at a simple, unambiguous classification. It faithfully reflected the nature of the empire of the Arsacids, who united under their scepter a great many peoples, but never managed—or wanted—to impose on them a uniform style and model of culture, which enabled those ethnic groups to maintain their own identities and allowed them to pursue their native cultural traditions.

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CHAPTER 7

THE SASANIAN EMPIRE (224–651 CE)

TOURAJ DARYAEE

In the early third century CE, when the Arsacids were fighting the Roman Empire and were involved in dynastic quarrels, Ardashir began a mutiny against Ardawan IV. Ardashir was able to dislodge the local rulers of Fars/Persis and the neighboring provinces and finally meet the Arsacid King of Kings at the plain of Hormozgan in 224 CE, where he defeated and killed him. From then on Ardashir took the title of *shāhān shāh*, "king of kings," and began the conquest of a territory that came to be known as *Ērānshahr*, "Land of the Aryans/Iranians." The Sasanian campaign to control the province of Persis/Fars had begun in 205–6, when the father of Ardashir I, Pabag, had dethroned the local ruler of the city of Istakhr, the capital of Fars, by the name of Gozihr. Pabag, according to later sources, was a priest of the fire-temple of Anahita (Middle Persian *Anāhīd*) at the city of Istakhr, and this must have been a stage for the rallying of the local Persian warriors, who were devoted to the Zoroastrian goddess. The cult of lady Anahita/Anahid was an old one in Fars, and so religion was used to bring about political control over the Iranian Plateau. This would not be the last time that a religious leader wrested control from the king of Iran.

Pabag had initially sought to place his elder son, Shapur (Middle Persian *Shābuhr*), on the throne, but the prince died under mysterious circumstances. If the graffiti at Persepolis is an accurate portrayal of Pabag and his son Shapur, one can make several assumptions. One is that the Sasanians were becoming or had become a family that held both temporal and religious power in that region. Another is that the cult of fire, which is very much an idea connected with Zoroastrianism, was alive before Ardashir came to power. Ardashir was crowned King of Kings in 226 at the royal capital, Ctesiphon, in modern-day Iraq, and a new phase in Iranian history began.

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By this time, most of the Iranian Plateau and the Arab side of the Persian Gulf had become part of Ardashir's empire. In his invasion of Armenia, Syria, and Anatolia, he came into conflict with the Roman Empire and the emperor Alexander Severus. While Severus was alive, Ardashir was not able to defeat the Romans, but after the emperor died in 235 CE, Mesopotamia, Dura, Carrhae, Nisibis, and finally Hatra fell to the Sasanians in 240. Ardashir then retired and spent the last years of his life in Fars while his son, Shapur I, came to the throne and continued his conquests.

The material remains pertaining to Ardashir's rule are especially rich in providing us with his worldview. In commemoration of his victory, at the rock-reliefs at Naqsh-e Rostam he is shown on his horse standing over the dead body of Artabanus (Ardawan) V. Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazdā) faces him on a horse as well, standing over the body of the Zoroastrian evil spirit Ahriman, and hands the symbol of sovereignty to Ardashir I. This relief demonstrates that Ardashir wants others to understand that he was anointed by Ohrmazd to rule over a territory that the Sasanian royal inscriptions call *Ērānshahr*. It is from this time onward that the term *Ērān* (Iran) becomes used in Iranian sources for most of the territory that the Sasanians rule over.

Ardashir's coins also bear a standard formula, which the succeeding kings in the third and the fourth centuries adopted: *mazdysn bgy'lthštl MLK'n MLK''yl'n MNW ctry MN yzad'n*, "Mazdaean Majesty, Ardashir, King of Kings of *Ērān,* whose lineage (is) from the Gods." According to this legend, Ardashir considered himself a worshipper of Ohrmazd first and foremost. Secondly, he saw himself as being of divine descent, as is manifest from his rock relief at Naqsh-e Rostam and other reliefs. The formula "King of Kings" also attests to the fact that during the Arsacid period the Arsacid king was the greatest among other local kings, and the Sasanians adopted this tradition early on. In the later period, however, the Sasanians managed to place their own relatives in charge of most provinces.

What is clear is that *Ērān/Ērānshahr* was seen as having a set territory in the minds of the Sasanian Persians. This information is gained from the third-century CE inscriptions of the Zoroastrian priest Kerdir (Karter), who tells us what was considered to be *Ērān* and what was considered to be *an-Ērān,* or non-Iranian, territories. Kerdir in his inscription tells us that he established many fires, fire-temples, and priests in *Ērān*, which according to him included the following regions: Persis, Parthia, Babylonia, Mesene, Adiabene, Azerbaijan, Isfahan, Ray, Kerman, Sistan, Gurgan, and Peshavar. According to him, then, Syria, Cilicia, Armenia, Georgia, Caucasian Albania, and Balasagan, which were under Sasanian control, were deemed to be *an-Ērān*. Kerdir may be considered the father of the Zoroastrian church in this period, as he was the one who attempted to make Zoroastrianism into a uniform body, with a unified doctrine, attached to the state. Thus, the church and the state began to work hand in hand and functioned like two pillars in keeping the Sasanian Empire and Zoroastrianism functioning.

Even before Kerdir, another priest named Tosar (Tansar) was responsible for sifting through the documents and oral tradition to come up with a Zoroastrian

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doctrine, which had been dispersed and in a state of flux since the time of Alexander the Great's destruction of the Achaemenid Persian Empire in 330 BCE. The Sasanian sources state that Tosar was responsible for the codification of the *Avesta*, the collection of Zoroastrian hymns that later were put into writing, and that Kerdir brought about the organization of the church and a religious hierarchy. The judges were drawn from among the Zoroastrian priests as the law was "Zoroastrianized." What we know of Zoroastrianism at this period is that there was an intense respect and worship of Ohrmazd, while other lesser deities such as lady Anahid (Anahita) and Mihr (Mithra) were also honored. Sacrifices of meat, bread, and wine were offered for the soul of the departed. Three major fire-temples were established for the three classes (*pēshag*), those of the priests, the warriors, and the artisans and masses. Smaller fire-temples existed in the villages and towns, attended by a teacher-priest (*hērbed*). The magus (*mow/mog*) had a higher status and later was also involved in economic and legal matters. Above him was the chief magus (*mowbed*), who held an important position and was probably the main religious authority throughout the empire.

Ardashir's son, Shapur I, was coregent with him until 240 CE. This is apparent from coinage that portrays both men together, and was probably undertaken by Ardashir to ensure a safe succession. This was because he had other sons who had been given governorships, and they might have wanted to assume the throne, just as he had done in his youth. This system is characteristic of the Sasanians, where sons were sent to different provinces to rule and when the ruler died, one of the heirs would assume the throne. In this system, there is always a danger of dynastic squabbling, of which the Sasanians had their fair share. The method of election was initially based on the choice of the preceding king, but later the nobility and the Zoroastrian priests took over the decision. Shapur I did accompany his father in battle, which made him battle-ready and in fact ensured his success in wars against Rome. In 243/244 CE, the Roman Emperor Gordian III invaded Mesopotamia, but Shapur was able to kill him at Massice (Misikhe), close to the Euphrates River; he later renamed the battle site Piruz-Shapur ("Victorious is Shapur"). According to Shapur's inscription at Ka'be-ye Zardosht in Fars, the elected Roman general Philip the Arab was forced to sign a treaty that ceded much territory and a large sum of gold as war reparations, amounting to 500,000 denarii. Shapur commemorated his victory on a rock relief at Naqsh-e Rostam (and also at Tang-e Chogan and Darab), showing him subjugating the two Roman emperors to his will. Shapur I has also left us a long biography of his deeds on the Ka'be-ye Zardosht at Naqsh-e Rostam, which is the first long testament from the Sasanians themselves and demonstrates their outlook. In this inscription, he provides information on his religious convictions, his lineage, the areas that he ruled over, and the fate of the Romans. He states that Gordian and his army, which included many soldiers from Germanic tribes, were destroyed. Shapur also states that Caesar lied, which may have been an important theological support for hostilities with the Romans. In the Zoroastrian tradition, lying is a great sin and it must be confronted and combated at all costs. Those who lie are considered to be the followers of the Evil Spirit, Ahreman, and against the

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Wise Lord, Ohrmazd. In 260, he also took Syria, and the new Roman emperor, Valerian, along with senators and soldiers, was captured and deported to the city of Bishapur (Middle Persian *Bēshābuhr*). Now Goths, Romans, Slavs, and other people from Europe were incorporated into the Persian Empire. No other person in the world could have claimed previously that he had been able to kill one Roman emperor, make another tributary, and capture and imprison the third. He was very much aware of his feat and did not hesitate to mention his heroism in his inscription. While the borders of Rome and Persia fluctuated between Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Syria, depending on the military success of either side, this did not mean that travel was restricted. In fact, people from both sides traveled from one side to another, engaged in trade, and intermarried. This openness and ease of movement made spies useful, and supplying information to the enemy was seen as a great betrayal by both sides.

Armenia would remain the main area of contention between the Sasanians and the Romans until the end of the Sasanian period. The Armenian situation was complex, and it was important to both sides because of strategic and economic interests, and because it served as a buffer between them. But when a branch of the Arsacid royal family took refuge there and assumed rulership of the Armenians, this was enough for Shapur to put an end to it. He planned the assassination of the Armenian king Khosrov and installed a king loyal to him by the name of Tiridates (Tirdad, 252–62). Armenia's importance in the eyes of the Persians is quite clear, since several of the heirs to the Sasanian throne would be stationed in Armenia and called *wuzurg-Arman-shāh* "The Great King of Armenia."

During Shapur's reign, his religious outlook was also a matter of importance. The Zoroastrian church was being formed by Kerdir, who was trying to establish a body of law, canonize the *Avesta*, create a common ritual doctrine, unify the belief system, and establish a Zoroastrian hierarchy tied to the state. At the same time, a man by the name of Mani emerged from Mesopotamia, professing a religion that by all accounts was intended to be universal. At this time it would be wrong to see Zoroastrianism as an exclusive religion, since Zoroastrianism was a religion that could be adopted by the conquered people. Shapur's support of Mani, and at the same time his commitment to Ohrmazd and Zoroastrianism, has caused problems for historians. But if Shapur saw the growing power and structure of the Zoroastrian church, might he not have attempted to show them that the King of Kings still had the last say? Was it not the Sasanians who were the caretakers and priests of the Anahid fire-temple and who were schooled in the rites and ceremonies? Sasanian concern with politics need not have diminished their religious authority. Mani was able to propagate his religion during Shapur's rule and that of his son. Still, Shapur mentions in his inscription that many Wahram fires (meaning victorious fires) were established and that lamb, wine, and bread were offered to the gods for the souls of the kings and queens of the family of Sasan.

If one compares the retinue, the bureaucracy, and the size of the court between Ardashir I and Shapur I, one begins to see that there was an increase in the administrative apparatus and the court. This would be natural, since if an empire was to

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be centralized and to function, it needed to have not only a king but also governors (*shahrābs*), viceroys (*bidakhsh*), a steward of royal property (*framādār*), a commander of the royal guard (*hazābad*), scribes (*dibīrs*), treasurers (*ganzwars*), judges (*dādwars*), and a market inspector (*wāzārbed*), along with the local kings (*shahrdārān*), princes of royal blood (*wāspuhragān*), grandees (*wuzurgān*), minor nobility (*āzādān*), and other officials mentioned in the inscription. The nobility (*wuzurgān*), whose loyalty to their clans had been paramount, now submitted to the Sasanians. Such families as Waraz, Suren, Andigan, Karen, and others were given various honors and positions, such as being master of ceremonies or crown bestower. They also displayed their clan emblems or coat of arms on their caps (*kulāfs*), as is apparent on the rock reliefs at Naqsh-e Rajab and Naqsh-e Rostam. We do not know which symbol belonged to which clan or what the symbols meant, whether they were insignias or names of the clans made into symbols.

The next king, Hormizd I (270–71), ruled a short time and we know very little about him. He was chosen over his brother Narseh, who now became the king of Armenia as heir apparent. Religiously, again it is not clear why Hormizd allowed Mani to freely preach his message and also let Kerdir continue his activity, giving him new ranks and titles. This may have been part of his campaign of dual containment, controlling both the religions that were attempting to dominate the region. Bahram I (Middle Persian *Wahrām*) (271–74) also had a short rule, but we have more information on him. He was the eldest son of Shapur I, but he had been bypassed by Hormizd. Initially, Kerdir appears to have backed his succession, and consequently the Zoroastrian church and Kerdir himself benefited from his enthronement. Bahram II may have needed Kerdir's support in bypassing Narseh, who was the king of Armenia, and it is in this period that Kerdir begins his real ascent to power. Kerdir also began the persecution of the religious minorities in the empire, such as the Jews, Christians, Manichaeans, Mandeans, and Buddhists. It was at this time that Mani was sent from the east to present himself to Bahram, and we have a Manichaean text that describes the harsh treatment of the prophet. He was scolded for neither being a good doctor nor having any other benefit. Consequently, he was imprisoned and put to death in 276 with the blessing (and to the relief) of Kerdir.

During the rule of Bahram II (274–93), Kerdir achieved higher rank and status, and it was during this period that the Sasanian kings lost much of their religious power as caretakers of the Anahid fire temple to Kerdir, who became the judge of the whole empire. This meant that from this point on, the priests acted as judges throughout the empire, and court cases were probably based on Zoroastrian law except when members of other religious minorities had disputes with each other. Bahram II was the first ruler to have a family portrait struck on his coins. On the *drahms* (silver coins) he is shown with his queen Shabuhrdokhtag and his son Bahram III. He also had many rock reliefs carved in his memory with his family. This is an interesting feature of Bahram II: he was very much concerned to leave a portrait of his family, which incidentally gives us information about the court and the Persian concept of a royal banquet. This included wine drinking, feasting, music,

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and games being played before the king and the courtiers, as evidenced from not only the rock reliefs but also silver dishes of the Sasanian period. These portraits may also have been a means of justifying Bahram's election over Narseh, who must have been quite dissatisfied at being bypassed several times, although he was the "Great King of Armenia," a title reserved for the heir to the throne. Bahram's precarious situation is also clear because of the revolt of his brother Hormizd in Sistan in 287. Furthermore, Rome invaded Sasanian territory under the emperor Carus, who died on the way to battle in 283, after which Diocletian, who had to deal with the internal problems of Rome, made a treaty with Bahram II that ensured the Perso-Roman borders. Now Bahram could deal with his brother Hormizd, and Diocletian was able to focus his attention on the reforms that brought order to an otherwise chaotic Roman empire. This treaty divided Armenia among the two powers, leaving western Armenia in the hands of Tirdat (Tiridates IV) and the greater part under the rule of Narseh. By 293, when Bahram II died, his rival Hormizd had been pacified in the east, but dynastic squabbling continued. Bahram III, who was known as King of the Sakas (*sagān-shāh*), was brought to the throne by one faction, perhaps with the backing of Kerdir and a Wahnam, son of Tartus, as well. Narseh left Armenia for Iraq and was met by a group of the nobility and others who gave their allegiance to him.

Narseh has left his personal testimony in a long inscription at Paikuli in Iraq. It is a biography and a narrative justifying his election to the throne, saying that the nobility and courtiers asked him to take the throne when he met them. His rock relief at Naqsh-e Rostam is also important in that it shows him receiving the symbol of sovereignty from the goddess Anahid. Leaving the religious implications aside, could this mean that politically Narseh was able to regain control of the fire-temple of Anahid at Istakhr and was reorienting his devotion to this deity at the cost of Kerdir's power? Of course it is possible that devotion to Lady Anahid was never forsaken, but one may surmise that the mere representation of Narseh along with Anahid may hint at a religio-political shake-up in the Sasanian Empire. This perhaps reaffirmed the tradition of Narseh's father and grandfather, Shapur I and Ardashir I, as the original and legitimate rulers who began their campaign around the cult of this goddess.

On the military front against Rome, Narseh was not successful. While initially he was able to crush the Roman forces under Galerius, in a second battle against Diocletian he lost his entire harem and had to negotiate their return by ceding parts of Mesopotamia, restoring Armenia to Tirdat and the King of Iberia, who was now chosen by the Romans. As has been suggested, Narseh's rule announced a new balance of power among the Romans and the Persians. This weakness in imperial aspiration may be apparent from the omission of *an-Ērān* from his title on some of the coins.

Hormizd II (302–9) succeeded his father, who did not have much success in military terms; even worse for the Sasanians, it was during his reign that Armenia under King Tiridates IV adopted Christianity. Consequently, some of the Armenian feudal clans (*nakharars*) converted as well and supported Tirdat against those

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nakharars who were loyal to the Sasanians, and more specifically against those who honored the ancient Mazdean/Zoroastrian tradition of Armenia. It has usually been the case that Armenians have seen this momentous event as a break from the old "pagan" past, when the Armenian nation and identity was established through the medium of Christianity. But one can look at the event in another way as well, namely through the eyes of the Armenians who did not convert to the new religion. Those Armenians who chose to stay faithful to their ancient heritage went down into Armenian historiography as villains worshiping *Ormizd, Anāhit*, and *Vahagn*.

When Hormizd II died, his son Adur-Narseh was chosen to rule, but he ruled only briefly and was deposed by the nobility and the priests. Then the infant son of Hormizd II, named Shapur II (309–79), was put on the throne; a legend says that the courtiers and the clergy placed the crown on the womb of his mother when she was pregnant. One can assume that during the early years of his reign, the court and the Zoroastrian priests ran an empire that was secure and stable enough structurally and administratively to survive without a strong monarch. This scenario also signaled to the courtiers and the nobility that the empire could be managed without a powerful king. The Arabs in eastern Arabia raided the southwestern provinces of the Sasanian Empire, while Constantine the Great and the other Caesars battled for the soul of the Roman Empire, which made the Persians safe on the Western front. When Shapur had come of age, he took revenge on the Arabs, and hence received the title "Shoulder Piercer" (Arabic *Dhū al-Aktāf*), referring to the punishment inflicted on the Arab tribes. It is again here that we hear of Arabs forced to immigrate into the Sasanian Empire by Shapur II, namely Banu Bakr ibn Wa'il and Banu Hanzalah in Kerman and Khuzistan. Thus the relation between the Arabs and Persians was not just on the frontiers, but also within the Sasanian Empire.

Also for the first time we hear of Hunnic tribes encroaching into the empire from Central Asia, but Shapur II was able to contain them and with their alliance face the Romans. Shapur placed his son, who now took the title "King of Kushan" (*kushān-shāh*), on the throne in the east, as is apparent from the coins and a few inscriptions in Kushan territory. By 359, Shapur reached Amida, whose population was deported to Khuzistan, but the Roman emperor Julian countered with victories in 363. We are told that among the Roman generals there was a Persian renegade by the name of Hormizd who commanded the cavalry. Julian had destroyed his own navy so that his forces would not retreat, and Shapur had adopted a scorched-earth policy in Mesopotamia that had resulted in hunger among the Roman forces. In June 363, Persian forces equipped with elephants defeated the Romans, and Julian was killed in battle, probably by cavalry spearmen (*kontophoroi*). Jovian was elected as Roman emperor and had to make peace, ceding territory in Mesopotamia and Syria to the Persians. Roman sources lament the fact that now the enemy hoisted Persian standards over the city of Nisibis. The new Emperor Valens had to deal with the Germanic tribes in the Balkans, and so the Sasanians got the chance to invade Armenia. The Christians of the Sasanian Empire were also persecuted when the city of Susa, which was the hotbed of Christian activity, was razed by the elephants of the Sasanian army.

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Internally, the Zoroastrian priest named Adurbad i Mahrspandan was to canonize the *Avesta* and the Zoroastrian tradition. By the end of the fourth century, a system was beginning to form whereby the Christian bishop resided at the capital, Ctesiphon, along with the Jewish exilarch, the Resh Galut, and they paid taxes in return for peace and security. By this time religious communities were being established, and the foundation of the society of Late Antiquity in Persia was being laid by the Zoroastrian priests, the Jewish rabbis, and the Christian clergy. We do not know how far Shapur was able to cut the power of the grandees and the clergy, but since he was a strong ruler, he was able to hold his own. The only hint that may suggest that the Zoroastrian clergy were able to impose themselves on the monarchy is that Shapur II is one of the last kings to call himself one "whose lineage (is) from the Gods." It may be that finally the King of Kings had become a secular ruler whose religious authority had become minimal.

The Zoroastrian clergy appears to have become established and powerful during the reign of Shapur II, which may have caused the stripping of his deified title. One may also consider that the Zoroastrian priests in Persis had become too powerful and the king decided not only to shift their focus away from their traditional stronghold, but to present a new place and a new image. The artistic style is essentially different from those in Persis. Mithra's image becomes prominent, along with that of Ohrmazd. Ardashir II and Shapur III are presented motionless and standing frontally, flanked by two small Middle Persian inscriptions bearing the traditional formula that Ardashir I had first adopted on his coins and inscriptions. They are not receiving a diadem from the gods, nor are they victorious over any enemies, but rather posing for a personal portrait. At Taq-e Bustan, the monuments of Ardashir II (379–83) and his son, Shapur III (383–88) are present. These kings, along with Bahram IV (388–99), all met violent ends, which suggests the growing power of the nobility and the priests since the time of Shapur II. This growing power of the nobility is reflected in the brief description of the rule of Ardashir II, who is said to have killed a number of the great men and holders of authority in order to reduce their power. During Bahram IV's reign, Armenia lost any semblance of independence, the western part becoming part of the Roman Empire and the east put under the rule of the ruler's brother, Bahram Shapur (Armenian *Vramshapuh*) as king of Perso-Armenia in 394.

With the reign of Yazdgerd I (399–420) we begin to get a new ideological outlook and treatment of the religious minorities in the empire. His coins add the slogan "who maintains peace in his realm," while the Sasanian sources call him "sinner." This is purely priestly propaganda, which looked down upon his good treatment of the religious minorities, especially the Jews and the Christians. In fact, Christianity was able to become a recognized religion when the first synod of the Nestorian Church was convened in 410, during Yazdgerd's rule. The Byzantine historian Agathias calls Yazdgerd a pro-Christian monarch, but more importantly a "friendly and peaceable" ruler who never once made war on the Romans. Now Persian Christianity became officially recognized and the Nestorian Patriarch resided at the royal city of Ctesiphon; he and the Jewish exilarch became responsible for their coreligionists.

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By all accounts, the rule of Yazdgerd I was peaceful and operated on terms of mutual respect with the eastern Roman Empire. In fact, the Emperor Arcadius (383–408) asked the Persian ruler to become the guardian of his son Theodosius II, and this tradition lived on, with sometimes the Romans and sometimes the Persians asking the other side for guardianship of the heirs to the throne of the respective empires. This action indicates that by the fifth century both empires saw each other as equals and worthy of having their heirs at the court of the other for securing succession. It also indicates that perhaps they were each more fearful of internal opposition than of each other. In 414, when Yazdgerd I died, his eldest son, Shapur, left Armenia to take the throne but was murdered by the nobility; they placed on the throne Khosrow, who was not related directly to Yazdgerd I. Another son of Yazdgerd I, Bahram (Wahram) V, who had been sent to the Arab court at al-Hira, came with a force of mainly Arabs and forced Khosrow to abdicate in 420. By all accounts, Bahram V (420–438) was a successful warrior; he defeated the Hephthalites in the east, and in 422 a peace treaty was signed giving religious freedom to the Christians in the Sasanian Empire and to the Zoroastrians in the eastern Roman Empire. At this time, Armenia's status also changed when the Armenian *nakharar*s once again sought the aid of the Sasanians in the deposing of their king, Artaxias IV (Artashes), the son of Vramshapuh. In 428, Bahram V removed him and placed a margrave (*marzbān*) in Armenia, ushering in what is known in Armenian history as the Marzpanate period.

There are many romantic stories about Bahram V, such as the importation of Indian minstrels as entertainers who are said to be the ancestors of the Lurs (*lur*s), and his pleasure in drinking, and especially hunting, earned him the epitaph of *Gur* "onager." The composition of the first Persian poem is also attributed to him in early Persian compendiums, but this is a stretch of the imagination. He captured the imagination even with his mysterious death, about which it is said that one day while hunting in Media he fell into some marshes and disappeared.

In the early years of the rule of Yazdgerd II (438–57), the focus shifted to the east to battling what the sources call the Kushans, who were probably the Huns. He was stationed in Khorasan for some time until he was able to secure the eastern flank of the empire, and Bactria (Balkh) came under the control of the Sasanians. He then moved toward Armenia and Albania and at the instigation of his prime minister (*wuzurg framādār*, Armenian *vzurk hramatar*), Mihr-Narseh, gave an edict in which Zoroastrianism was made the official religion in Armenia. This caused an uprising by some of the Armenian *nakharar*s who had become Christian. The Armenians were not united in this action, and as a result, at the battle of Avarair in 451 the Armenian forces, led by Vardan of the Mamikonian family, were annihilated, and many were deported to Iran.

The two sons of Yazdgerd II, Hormizd II (457–59) and Piruz (or Peroz, 459–84), ruled consecutively, although the latter deposed the former in a power struggle. Piruz fled to the east to Khorasan with an army probably consisting of Kidarites or Hephthalites and regained the throne. Meantime, while Hormizd II may have crowned himself, we hear that their mother, Denag, was governing the capital or

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parts of it. During this confusion, Albania gained independence and the eastern boarders of the empire were laid open to Hephthalite attack. When Piruz came to the throne, he pacified Albania but allowed the Armenians and the Albanians to practice Christianity and made an agreement with the eastern Roman Empire to cooperate in defending the Caucasus pass. The Sasanians met their match against the Hephthalites in Khorasan, and in 469 Piruz and his harem and retinue were captured by their leader, Khoshnawaz. This calamity took place during the third major battle, while during the first two his war was partly financed by the eastern Roman Empire. This was the low point of Sasanian rule, when they in fact became tributaries to the Hephthalites and ceded territory to them for returning the king and his entourage to Sasanian territory. The chief priest (*mowbed*), his son Kavad, and his daughter were kept with the Huns as insurance. The only reason the Romans did not attack Persia at this time was that Emperor Zenon was facing internal problems and could not focus his attention to the east.

Piruz took it upon himself to avenge his loss in the east. This time, in 484, his actions cost him his life and his entire army. The short rule of Balash (484–88) was uneventful, and since the empire was weak, the king kept peaceful relations with Armenia and the Hephthalites by giving tribute to the latter. He was deposed by the nobility and priests in 499, when Kavad I (488–96, 499–531) was brought to the throne. The fifth-century kings were generally weak, and the nobility and the Zoroastrian priests were able to conduct their activities at the expense of the royal power. This, however, did not mean that the empire was not centralized or effective. The bureaucratic apparatus had reached such a level of sophistication that the death of a king would not bring the empire down. This centralization is also apparent in the growing number of titles that appear on administrative seals, as well as the appearance of mint marks on the coins. Economically, the empire was not faring well, either because of the drought and famine or the inconclusive wars that had resulted in huge sums of tribute going to the Hephthalites while there was no victory in the west yielding gold from the Romans.

Thus, Kavad I had to face the economic and political problems with which the empire grappled at the end of the fifth century. It is at this time that we have some information on Zoroastrian sectarianism in the Sasanian Empire. A Zoroastrian priest by the name of Mazdak was able to capture the attention of Kavad I and to make reforms that went beyond the accepted religious dogma. This was a social change that caused much resentment during and especially after the event in the minds of the Zoroastrian priests. Sources tell us that Mazdak preached an egalitarian social system, one in which equality in wealth, women, and property would be propagated. Here, however, one needs to see the Mazdakite movement in terms of its function as a political tool for Kavad. Kavad was able to use Mazdak's ideas to weaken the power of the nobility and the grandees, the large landowners and the priests, who were involved in every aspect of the state and were not always honest. Mazdak's teaching went against the social division enforced by the *Avesta*, or perhaps how the Zoroastrian priests had interpreted the *Avesta*. Now Mazdak had a novel interpretation of the Zoroastrian religion. Kavad may have believed in his

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message or not, but he certainly used it to his advantage, leveling the upper classes and making the king more appealing and accessible to the masses by adopting Mazdakite ideas. Imperial granaries were given away, and land was redistributed among the peasants. In the Zoroastrian texts, composed by the very priests who were against this reform, this period is seen as a time of chaos when women were shared by all and no one knew one's lineage anymore.

The remaining dissatisfied nobility and priests had Kavad arrested and imprisoned in 496, and they brought his brother Jamasp to the throne for several years. Kavad was able to escape to the Hephthalites, who raised a force and restored him to the throne in 499. This action also demonstrated the beleaguered situation of the empire, where in a time of chaos a small force was able to overrun the nobility-priest alliance. In the early sixth century, Kavad conducted campaigns against the Romans that were predatory in nature, and in his search for money he was successful. He forced the Mazdakite religion upon not only the population of the empire, where many must have been happy, especially the lower classes, but also upon the clients of the Sasanians, such as the Arabs in Najd and Hijaz in the first quarter of the sixth century.

Once the economic, political, and social situation was under control, Kavad began to institute reforms that were fundamental to the empire in the sixth century and were usually credited to Khosrow I. The office of the "protector of the poor and judge" was created from the ranks of the *mowbeds* (chief priests) to help the poor and the downtrodden, which was not only a reaction to the Mazdakite movement, but was also a general trend in Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and later Islam.

The Hephthalites, luckily for the Sasanians, were in decline and division by 515. The Sasanian revival was taking place, and its effect was that Georgia as well as parts of inner Arabia and Oman were now controlled by the Persians. Persians had already settled in Central Asia, and traders had gone to India, China, and as far away as Indonesia. They were more interested in business and wanted to control the trade in spice and silk, motivated by economic gain, rather than as a state-sponsored activity. The Mazdakites supported one of the sons of Kavad I by the name of Kawus, who was the eldest and the heir. Here we have information that the court and the religious hierarchy decided in favor of Khosrow I, who was younger but anti-Mazdakite. Kawus was ruling in the north in Tabaristan and battled Khosrow, but was ultimately defeated. By this time, Khosrow had become instrumental in the murder of Mazdak and a large number of his followers who had proclaimed their allegiance to Mazdak openly.

Khosrow I (531–79), also known as *Anushirvān* (Immortal Soul) and *Dadgar* (Just), represents the epitome of the philosopher-king in Sasanian history. He put an end to Kawus and the nobles who favored him and destroyed the stronghold of Mazdakites in the empire, but he continued his father's administrative and economic reforms and imperialistic activities. Administratively, four chanceries (*dēwān*s) were created for the empire, which probably corresponded with the military division of the empire under the rule of four generals (*spāhbed*s). Prior to this a single *Ērān-spāhbed* had led the army, but it had become exceedingly difficult to manage several

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When Khosrow II came to the throne, he began to take revenge on those who had a hand in the murder of his father, although we are not sure if he himself was innocent of the crime. His uncle Bistam, who had been his supporter, was targeted and as a result took to Media, minted coins in his own name, and probably lived there until 600. So in the last decade of the sixth century, two people who were not deemed to be legitimate rulers by the Sasanians minted coins, and this is significant, since in 366 years, no one except the Sasanian king had been allowed or been able to mint coins in his own name. It is with this damage to Sasanian prestige and to the family of Sasan that we may turn to Khosrow II's career and conquests.

Khosrow II consolidated his power around the Persian Gulf and sent envoys to Arabia, as far as Mecca, to enquire about the situation. The last king of al-Hira, al-Nu'man III ibn al-Mundhir, was killed and the Lakhmid state put under other Persian loyalists in 602. When the Roman Emperor Maurice was removed and Phocas came to the throne, Khosrow II used this event as a pretext for the conquest of Syria and beyond. In 604, with blazing speed, his two generals Shahin and Shahrbaraz conquered Syria, Palestine, Anatolia, and Egypt and even went as far as Libya. This shocked Heraclius, who by 610 had become the new emperor of the eastern Roman, or Byzantine, Empire. Heraclius was intent on leaving for North Africa, but it is said that his mind was changed by the clergy, and with the aid of church funds he remained and mounted a counterattack. From the Black Sea he entered Armenia and went into the heart of the Persian Empire, sacking the sacred Adur Farnbay temple at Ganzak in retaliation for the taking of the "True Cross" by the Sasanians from Jerusalem. Along with the retreating Persian army, the Persian nobility and those attached to the Persians also retreated from Syria and Iraq. In a matter of years, Khosrow II went from a world conqueror, emulating the Achaemenid territorial integrity, to a humiliated king who was unable to protect the Zoroastrian fire-temples and his population. Khosrow was removed in 628 by the nobility and the priests, and all the invaded territories were returned to the Byzantines by 630.

In terms of imperial ideology, we may say that while the early Sasanians considered themselves to be from the lineage of the gods, they also used Achaemenid titles such as "King of Kings" on their coins and inscriptions. This heritage was set aside by the adoption of the Kayanid (Avestan) dynasty ideology in the fourth to sixth century CE, but Khosrow II proclaimed a return to the dual heritage of the Achaemenid and Kayanid ideology by minting coins in his name with the title of "King of Kings" and also inscribing for the first time the slogan "increased in glory" (*khwarrah abazūd*). *Khwarrah* is central to the ancient Persian royal ideology as demonstrated in the *Avesta*, and it was a prerequisite for rulership in the Iranian world. In Persian iconography, it is usually represented in the form of a halo that surrounds the bust of the ruler. This *khwarrah* or "glory" is god-given and is possessed only by the rightful ruler.

Khosrow II was a warrior-king, similar to the kings of the early Sasanian period. His grotto at Taq-e Bustan shows him in full body armor, characteristic of the Sasanian heavy cavalry, and shows the goddess Anahid, the lady of waters, standing above him pouring libation. In many ways, Khosrow represents the culmination of

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the Sasanian absolutism and one last return to past glories. While Ohrmazd was held to be the supreme deity, at Taq-e Bustan one also encounters Mihr and Anahid. These are the triple deities that were worshiped by Artaxerxes II in the Achaemenid period as well. Thus there was a full return to devotion of these deities at the end of the Sasanian period. The opulence of Khosrow's court is clearly demonstrated by the Taq-e Bustan rock-relief, where the king is shown on a boat hunting and musicians playing their harps, along with the retinue, on one side, and on the opposite wall another hunt on his estate (*dastgird*).

After Khosrow II, Kavad II came to the throne in 628, when he committed fratricide, killing every eligible male heir from the Sasanian family. This action would have a devastating effect on the future of the empire. That he did not want to be associated with his father's memory is apparent from his coinage, which reverted to the style of Khosrow I. In 630, his young son Ardashir III came to the throne, and it was during his reign that for a third time the Sasanian family was challenged by an outsider, the Sasanian general who had fought for and led the armies of Khosrow II. Shahrbaraz soon entered the capital, Ctesiphon, and put an end to the young ruler and proclaimed himself King of Kings. His actions may have been partly as a result of his respect for Khosrow II, since he punished and killed all those who had a hand in the murder of the fallen king. His peace with Heraclius in 629 and probably that ruler's backing, according to one Armenian source, gave him the impetus to conquer and take over the throne. This again was a serious setback to the Sasanian imperial ideology. However, he was not able to secure his throne, and in a matter of months he was killed.

One of the daughters of Khosrow II, Boran (Buran), came to the throne in 630 and ruled for less than two years. Her rule was a period of consolidation of imperial power and rebuilding of the empire. She attempted to consolidate the empire and relieve the population of heavy taxes, as the Islamic sources report. Her respect for her father is also clear, since she reverted to the coinage type he had used. She also minted gold coins that were ceremonial in nature and not meant for wide circulation but that stated that she was the restorer of her lineage, the race of gods, which was emphasized in the early Sasanian period. Of course, something should be said about a woman assuming the throne in the Sasanian Empire. She was probably brought to the throne because she was the only legitimate heir, along with her sister Azarmidokht, who ruled after her, because Kavad II had murdered all of her brothers. Azarmidokht ruled for six months and was faced with a challenge from the general of the northeast, Farrokh-Hormoz, whom she was able to kill. But in return, the son of the fallen general, Rostam, took revenge and killed the queen.

Between 631, when Boran died, and 632, when Yazdgerd III assumed the throne, there were a number of kings who assumed the throne and were either removed or challenged by other distant members of the family of Sasan. This period may be called a period of factionalism and division within the empire. We have a list of kings who struck coins and others who are known only from the literary sources, but this era is confusing in terms of succession, and only a tentative sequence of rulers can be supplied: Joshnasbandah, Azarmidokht, Hormizd V, Khosrow III,

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(Chinese *Bosi dudufu*) at Sistan, and was stationed at Zarang from 658 to 663. He was recognized as the legitimate king of Persia by the Chinese, but by 674–5 we hear that he went to the Chinese capital, Changan, probably because of further Arab Muslim victories. He died around 679, and his son Narseh was placed on the throne of Persia-in-exile. Piruz was commemorated with a stone statue which is still in existence at the entrance of the mausoleum of Gaozong and bears the inscription: "Piruz, King of Persia, Grand General of the Right Courageous Guard and Commander-in-chief of Persia." There the family of Sasan kept their royal status, became military generals, had temples built at Dunhuang (Shazhou), Wuwei (Liangzhou), Changan, and Luoyang, and lived alongside the other Persians who had been there for commercial activity or who had fled as a result of the Arab Muslim victories. The other son of Yazdgerd III, Bahram (*Aluohan* in Chinese sources), attempted to recapture lost territories from the Arab Muslims; he was ultimately unsuccessful, but Middle Persian texts, especially a small Middle Persian poem called *Abar Madan-i Wahram-i Warzawand* ("On the Coming of the Miraculous Bahram"), may contain a kernel of truth in regard to his campaigns. He died in 710. Bahram's son, Khosrow (*Juluo* in Chinese sources), who with the aid of the Turks invaded Persia, was not able to defeat the Arabs either, and this is the last time we hear of someone from the family of Sasan trying to recapture Persia. The Arab Muslim conquerors met stiff resistance in parts of the empire from the *dehqān*s and the Zoroastrian priests as well, while others agreed to submit to Arab governors and to pay a poll tax to remain in charge of their territory. Part of the Sasanian military also joined the Arab forces, and as a result they kept their status and continued the conquest of the region and Central Asia. The conquest brought parts of Asia closer together, and now Arabs, Persians, Indians, and Chinese met each other on the Silk Road.

Kingship and Political Ideology

At the head of the society stood the King of Kings, who in the third and fourth centuries CE was considered to be from the "race of gods" and to have semidivine status. He appointed his sons and local rulers to provinces and realms. The king established a fire from the time he came to office for himself and for each of his children and female family members. Each Sasanian king had his own specific crown that symbolized powers and Zoroastrian concepts. The most important was *khwarrah*, which can be translated "glory." The *khwarrah* was the prerequisite for rightful rule in the ancient Iranian world; it had its origin in the sacred Zoroastrian hymns, the *Avesta*. In later Persian literature and starting with Ferdowsi, the eleventh-century composer of the *Book of Kings* (*Shahnameh*), based on the Sasanian *Khoday-namag* (*Book of Lords*), the concept was further elaborated.

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Only the king had the power to mint coins, and he had his image on every Sasanian coin. In a few instances, the king chose to add his wife or deities, for example, the coinage of Bahram II with his wife, Shapurdokhtag, or Khusro II's obverse special issues coinage. From the sixth century, the moon and stars were placed at the four quadrants of the coins, portraying the king as the ruler of the four corners of the world. Islamic sources mention that when an audience was given to see the king, he was usually hidden behind a veil, as he was not to be seen by all. Only during specific times in the year did the king make a public appearance. For example, during the *Nowruz* (New Year) and *Mihregan* (autumn) celebrations, gifts were exchanged and the king made speeches to the public.

By the end of the fourth century, the sacral aspect of kingship was curtailed by the increasingly powerful Zoroastrian clergy, and from the sixth century onwards it gravitated toward the title and conception of *xwarrah* (glory) of the King of Kings of Iranians. Two women from the royal family also became rulers in the seventh century, demonstrating that female rule was allowed in the Sasanian Empire. In fact, women of the royal family were always respected and honored as mothers, wives, and daughters of the kings and the nobility. This is evidenced not only by the coinage but also by the rock reliefs, from the third century CE to the end of the Sasanian Empire, with women taking part in court scenes, family portraits, and investitures.

Religions of the Empire

The official religion of the Sasanian Empire was Zoroastrianism, or more exactly Mazdaism. The King of Kings on his inscriptions or coinage placed the word "Mazda-worshipper" (*mazdēsn*) first and foremost. The *Avesta* contains the doctrines and beliefs of the Zoroastrian religion (see chapter 3). Like any religion, Zoroastrianism evolved, and through interaction with other religions in late antiquity it developed a strong dualistic tradition. On the one side, the creator of all that was good, including humanity, was the work of Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazdā), while Ahriman (Angra Mainiiu) was responsible for harm and destruction in the world. The Sasanians also emphasized the millenarian aspect of Zoroastrianism, which waited for the savior to usher in the end of the world and of time. Calamities, and specifically the Arab Muslim conquest of Iran, were associated with an apocalyptic age, and thus this scenario appeared in most if not all of these Zoroastrian texts. The King of Kings used this dualistic worldview to his advantage in showing himself as the representative of Ohrmazd on earth and the enemy of the followers of Ahriman.

Fire-temples were established throughout the Sasanian Empire and beyond to educate and instruct and perform necessary rituals for the Zoroastrian community. The singing of the Avestan hymns and tending fire were important duties of *herbed*s and *mowbed*s, while the head of the order (*mowbedān mowbed*) oversaw the entire religious body and counseled the court. There appear to have been three large fire-

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CHAPTER 8

IRAN IN THE EARLY ISLAMIC PERIOD

MICHAEL G. MORONY

DURING the seventh century CE, the Sasanian Empire disappeared and was incorporated into the much larger early Islamic Empire, while Zoroastrianism was replaced by Islam as the religion of the rulers in Iran. Virtually all of the information about these changes is found in Arabic literary sources and reflects the point of view of the victors.

The most immediate reasons for the fall of the Sasanians were their recent defeat at the hands of the Byzantines, the four-year-long dynastic crisis from 628 to 632, and factional conflict among the Iranian nobles. By the time Muslim Arab armies began to attack Iraq, the Sasanians had already lost their possessions on the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen, Oman, and Bahrain, where their military colonies had recognized the new Muslim state at Medina.

The raid of Khalid ibn al-Walid in 633 breached the Sasanian frontier defenses in southeastern Iraq and then moved northward behind the Sasanian defenses along the middle Euphrates, defeating the forces of local Persian notables and their Christian Arab allies. The towns of Hira and Anbar agreed to pay tribute, and the Persian and Arab garrisons in the outposts west of Ayn al-Tamr were massacred. By the time Khalid left for Syria in the spring of 634, he had destroyed the Sasanian defensive system along the Euphrates frontier and weakened their Arab auxiliaries.

Meanwhile, the Sasanian succession crisis had been resolved by the enthronement of Yazdgerd III at Istakhr in 632, but resistance to the Muslims in the Sawad of Iraq was led by other members of the royal family and high nobles in defense of their own property. When the caliph Abu Bakr died in 634, the tribute arrangements that had been made with Khalid were abrogated along the Euphrates frontier, and the Muslims were driven out. In October 634, a Persian force accompanied by elephants and the Sasanian royal standard (*dirafsh-i kaviyan*) badly defeated Muslim

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forces on the Euphrates at the Battle of the Bridge, but were unable to follow up their victory because their general was recalled to the capital (al-Mada'in),[1] where the faction of Fayruzan and the people of Fars had rebelled against the commander-in-chief, Rostam, and his Median faction.

At the same time, the caliph Umar (634–44) sent reinforcements from various Arab tribes to al-Muthanna ibn al-Haritha on the Euphrates frontier, who was now joined by local Christian Arabs of the Namir and Taghlib tribes. In the fall of 635, a Persian force that attacked the Muslim camp at Nukhayla was routed, leaving the Sawad undefended. The last Persian watchtowers were now reduced, and Muslim forces spread out over the Sawad raiding villages, markets, and campgrounds from Anbar to Kaskar.

Late in 635, Utba ibn Ghazwan was sent by Umar with a small force to hold the southeastern end of the frontier in Iraq and prevent Persian assistance or a counter-attack on the Sawad from the direction of Maysan or Khuzistan. Utba's force camped at the deserted Persian frontier post at Khurayba, from which al-Ubulla, Furat, Dast-i Maysan, and Abar-Qubadh were conquered in the spring of 636, and the Muslims defeated and killed the *marzbān* (margrave) of Dast-i Maysan at the battle of Madhar. Victory and the prospect of booty attracted recruits, and the settlement at Khurayba developed into the garrison city of Basra.

The same year, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas was sent to Iraq by Umar with a force of between 6,000 and 10,000 men. They were met by Rostam, who crossed the Euphrates with a large Persian army that included some thirty elephants and the Sasanian royal standard. Rostam halted at al-Qadisiyya with the defensive line of the Atiq canal in front of him. The Muslim forces in the Sawad regrouped under Sa'd, who occupied the fortress of Udhayb while his army camped at the village of Qadis nearby waiting for reinforcements from Syria. The two armies confronted each other for four months until continuing Arab raids provoked the people of the Sawad to complain to Yazdgerd that Rostam was allowing the Arabs to loot them by not attacking. Yazdgerd ordered Rostam to attack.

The battle of al-Qadisiyya was probably fought in June 637. It is said to have lasted for three days, and casualties were heavy on both sides. It was decided by the arrival of Syrian reinforcements and Rostam's death on the battlefield. Some 4,000 Iranian infantry (the Hamra)[2] deserted to the Muslim army on the battlefield, converted to Islam, shared in the booty equally with the Arab Muslims, and took part in the rest of the campaign. The Sasanian army was completely routed at al-Qadisiyya, and as the survivors fled toward al-Mada'in they were hunted down and killed by the Muslim vanguard in every village, reed thicket, and riverbank. After the defeat at al-Qadisiyya, the Persian troops garrisoned in the Jazira, especially at Sinjar, were evacuated.

The Muslim vanguard prevented the fleeing Persians from regrouping by systematically pursuing them across the Sawad, while Muslim soldiers took the weapons, armor, and horses of their defeated enemies for themselves. The Muslims were helped by some local notables, such as Bistam, the *dehqān* of Burs. At Babil the remnants of the Sasanian army attempted to make a stand led by a group of noble

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Persian generals, but the Muslim vanguard defeated and scattered them again. Afterward, Hurmuzan fled to Khuzistan and Mihrajanqadhaq, while Fayruzan went to Nahavand and seized the royal treasures there. Nakhirjan and Mihran of Ray fled from Babil to al-Mada'in, cutting the floating bridge across the Tigris behind them.

As the Muslims neared al-Mada'in, a squadron loyal to Queen Boran, who swore that the Persian kingdom would not perish as long as they lived, was massacred at Sabat. But Sa'd was also joined at Sabat by a Persian notable called Shirzadh, who built twenty mangonels for the Muslim siege of Veh-Ardashir. The defenders evacuated to the east side of al-Mada'in across the Tigris, and the city surrendered. During the evacuation, some Persian cavalry were taken captive by the Muslims. When Veh-Ardashir fell, Yazdgerd sent his dependents in groups to Hulwan and fled from al-Mada'in himself with his elite cavalry, treasury, light furniture, wives, and children, and joined his dependents at Hulwan. Mihran of Ray and Nakhirjan were left behind to evacuate the royal treasures. All classes of people are said to have abandoned their property and escaped the city, but we are also told that there were many people in al-Mada'in when Sa'd occupied it, took 12,000 Persian cavalrymen captive, and took possession of most of the Sasanian royal treasure. The people in the White Palace at Ctesiphon and at Rumiyya surrendered and agreed to pay tribute, and Aspanbar and Kardbandad were taken. Sa'd resided in the White Palace, and the houses in al-Mada'in were divided among the Muslim soldiers who used the huge Sasanian audience hall (Iwan Kisra) as their first *masjid* (mosque) there.

Late in 637, one Muslim force marched up the Tigris from al-Mada'in and took Takrit, assisted by the Christian Arabs of the tribes of Namir and Ijl, who deserted to the Muslims during the siege. This was probably to cover the left flank of the Muslim vanguard of 12,000 men, including the Hamra, under Hashim ibn Utba that was pursuing Persians fleeing on the road to Hulwan. The Persian rear guard entrenched their families and baggage at Khanaqin and tried to cover their retreat under Khurrazad, the brother of Rostam. They were defeated by the Muslims at Jalula with heavy casualties, and the survivors were pursued to Khanaqin, where the fighting men were killed, including Mihran of Ray, although Faayruzan escaped. The Muslims captured the women, children, and property of the Persians. When the news reached Yazdgerd, he fled from Hulwan towards Ray, leaving Khosrawshunum with troops at Hulwan. The rout of his forces by the Muslims at Qasr-e Shirin was the last battle in this campaign. The Muslims occupied Hulwan, garrisoned it with some of the Hamra, and returned to al-Mada'in. Those Persians who had fled were allowed to return on condition of paying tribute. The Muslim army, including the Hamra, resettled, together with the Persian women and children taken captive at Khanaqin, at Kufa, which they founded near the older city of Hira on the Euphrates. By 638, Masabadhan and Mihrajanqadhaq in the western Jibal had been conquered by Kufan forces.

The Muslim conquest of Iraq proved to be decisive for the rest of the conflict. Iraq had been the location of the Sasanian royal capital and the source of one-third of Sasanian annual taxes. The Sasanians had also lost the royal treasure, significant

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military forces, and the leadership of many nobles who died defending Iraq. The Muslims now controlled Iraq's resources and had been joined by Sasanian soldiers, officials, and local landlords (*dehqāns*) who had defected to them. The organization of a military register (*diwan*) at Basra and Kufa assured the Muslim armies of regular stipends and rations in addition to booty. In the subsequent campaigns, Muslim armies from Iraq would be as well organized, equipped, and provisioned as Sasanian forces.

The next stage of the conflict started in Khuzistan, where Hurmuzan mounted an active defense by raiding Dast-e Maysan and Maysan in southeastern Iraq. Joint Basran and Kufan forces had driven him out by 639, and he was also faced with rebellions by Arab bedouins on the Khuzistan frontier and by Kurds in Fars. Hurmuzan was joined by a body of three hundred mailed cavalry (*asawira*), including seventy members of the high nobility and army officers, under Siyah al-Uswari, that was sent from Isfahan by Yazdgerd. Siyah increased his force on the way and reinforced the troops that Hurmuzan had divided up as garrisons in the fortified cities of Khuzistan. These were attacked in detail by Abu Musa al-Ash'ari with Basran forces. Persian resistance was fierce, but Abu Musa drove Hurmuzan out of Suq al-Ahwaz and then beseiged him at Shushtar with Kufan reinforcements for eighteen months to two years. The city of Ram-Hurmuz surrendered on terms. About the same time, al-Ala ibn al-Hadrami crossed the Gulf from Bahrayn and attacked Fars by sea in 640. He got as far as Istakhr, but the *marzbān* of Fars drove him back to the coast. In 642 Shushtar was delivered to Abu Musa by a local Persian notable called Sina, who arranged to open the gates in exchange for his personal security and the safety of his family, children, and possessions. Hurmuzan surrendered after resisting in the citadel and was sent to Medina. Sus and Jundishapur were then beseiged and fell, and Basran forces entered the southern Jibal. The *asawira* surrendered, joined the Muslim army, and settled in Basra as the allies of the Banu Tamim.

Meanwhile, Kufan forces moved up the Tigris river under Utba ibn Farqad in 641, took Nineveh, took the fortress across the river on terms of tribute for peace, founded Mosul there, and went on to conquer the districts along the Tigris and Greater Zab rivers as far as western Azerbaijan.

Yazdgerd managed to raise a large army in the Jibal by 642, which he positioned at Nahavand to prevent any Muslim attack from that direction and perhaps to retake Iraq. This appeared to pose a threat to the Muslim positions in Iraq and motivated the caliph, Umar, to join the armies of Kufa and Basra under the command of al-Nu'man ibn Amr ibn Muqarrin, to reinforce them with Arab troops from Syria and Oman and send them against the Persians. The battle of Nahavand was fought in the summer of 642 and was another military disaster for the Sasanians. Casualties are said to have been heavy on both sides; the battle lasted for several days, and was decided by ruse or by the arrival of Muslim reinforcements. The victory secured Iraq and Khuzistan for the Muslims, ended any centralized Sasanian resistance, and opened the Iranian Plateau to Muslim forces.

Yazdgerd fled from Isfahan to Istakhr, while in 643–44 Kufan and Basran forces spread out over western Iran, where they met only local resistance. Some places, such as Hamadan and Ray, were taken more than once, and the Kufans and Basrans

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was actually occupied and control secured by the establishment of Muslim garrisons. The main reasons for the renewed campaigns under Uthman were for strategic security and the income from tribute to support the Muslim garrison cities in Iraq, for booty to satisfy latecomers to the garrison cities, and to keep the Muslim soldiers occupied. At Hamadan, the people were forced to surrender on new terms: a tribute of 100,000 dirhams in return for the security of their possessions, rights, and children. At Isfahan the old urban center at Qih was destroyed, an Arab garrison of various tribes from both Basra and Kufa was established at Jay, and a *masjid* was built there. When Qum was conquered by Talha ibn al-Ahwas al-Ash'ari in 644, an Arab garrison was settled in one of its villages. The old city at Ray was also destroyed and a new town built next to it for the Arab garrison, with a *masjid* near the citadel. In 645, a garrison of 500 men was settled at Qazvin, supported by land grants, as a center for defense against Daylami raids. From 645 onwards, Kufan forces under al-Walid ibn Uqba campaigned on a four-year rotation in the two frontier districts (*thughur*) of Ray and Azerbaijan. One-quarter of the 40,000 soldiers in Kufa campaigned each year, 4,000 in Ray and 6,000 in Azerbaijan. Al-Walid increased the tribute of Azerbaijan to 800,000 dirhams and sent forces to raid Muqan, Talishan, and Armenia for booty and captives. Derbend was occupied in 645. The northern frontier was stabilized from about 650, when Sa'id ibn al-As was governor of Kufa. Bardha'a was occupied by 652, and Sa'id is said to have occupied Gurgan (temporarily) and attacked Tabaristan unsuccessfully. Arab settlers were attracted to Azerbaijan because of the opportunities for fighting on the frontier. Al-Ash'ath ibn Qays al-Kindi, the Kufan tribal leader, was in Azerbaijan during the entire caliphate of Uthman, developed interests there, and is credited with completing the conquest of Azerbaijan. By the time the caliph Ali (656–61) appointed al-Ash'ath governor of Azerbaijan, Arab soldiers had settled in Ardabil and built a *masjid* there. The Muslims raided Gilan and Muqan from Azerbaijan, but little new territory was occupied.

The Muslims were primarily interested in strategic security and tribute in the Jibal and Azerbaijan. Direct control by military garrisons was limited to a few key places: Nahavand, Dinawar, Sirawan, Saymara, Isfahan, Qum, Qazvin, Ray, and Ardabil. At those places that surrendered on terms, the payment of tribute was in return for the security of the inhabitants and their children and property. The tribute was usually raised after rebellions were suppressed. The Muslims exercised little direct control over the countryside, where local authorities willing to collaborate were left in charge. Iranian notables who survived by virtue of tribute agreements they made during the conquest collected it in their own districts. The Muslims do not seem to have advanced beyond the limits of the Sasanian state in the north, where a permanent frontier had stabilized by the 650s. Muslim forces engaged in raids and defense against Kurds, Daylamis, and Khazars, but Gilan and Mazandaran were never incorporated into the caliphal empire.

Yazdgerd had gone to Istakhr after Nahavand, where he tried to establish a base in the province of Fars. Tribute was also withheld there after the death of Umar, but the accounts and chronology of the conquest of Fars in the 640s are contradictory

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and confused, possibly reflecting the actual disorder. It would seem that places such as Bishapur, Istakhr, Gur (Firuzabad), and Fasa rebelled and were reconquered multiple times. The final conquest of Fars, as well as of the rest of the Sasanian Empire to the east, was the work of Abdullah ibn Amir ibn Kurayz, the governor of Basra (649–55). His army consisted mainly of Arabs of the tribe of Tamim and the Banu Sulaym clan of the Abd al-Qays. One thousand *asawira* who had settled at Basra as allies of Tamim fought in his vanguard. Ibn Amir accepted the surrender of Istakhr from its governor, Mahak, and headed for Darabjird and Gur (where Yazdgerd had gone). Darabjird was surrendered by its *herbadh*, but Istakhr rebelled behind Ibn Amir, who returned and besieged it. He destroyed the walls of Istakhr with mangonels and is said to have killed some 40,000 Persian nobles (*azadegan*), grandees (*buzurgan*), and cavalry (*asawira*) who had taken refuge there. Istakhr was left in ruins, and the last important Sasanian military force and many noble families had been eliminated. Gur fell to Ibn Amir either before or after the fall of Istakhr. Kariyan, Kazerun, and Siraf were occupied, and Yazdgerd fled to Kerman in 650, pursued by a Basran force that froze to death in a snowstorm at Bimand.

Yazdgerd was cash-poor and had a large retinue to support. His arrogance turned the *marzbān* of Kerman against him, and he left for Sistan, just eluding another Basran force that defeated and killed the *marzbān*. But when Yazdgerd demanded tax arrears from the governor of Sistan, he lost the latter's support and headed for Marv. Ibn Amir, who had arrived in Kerman, sent a force to Sistan under Rabi ibn Ziyad al-Harithi in about 651. The *dehqān* of Zaliq surrendered on terms, and Karkuya, Haysun, and Nashrudh followed suit, but the *marzbān* or *ispahbad* of Sistan, Iran, son of Rostam, put up a fierce defense outside of Zarang before being routed by the Muslims and driven back into the city with heavy casualties. After conferring with the notables and the Zoroastrian chief priest, they decided to surrender, and were required to pay an annual tribute of one million dirhams together with 1,000 slave boys bearing 1,000 golden vessels. Rabi's force garrisoned Zarang.

When Ibn Amir invaded Khorasan from Kerman with the main Basran army, he left Mujashi ibn Mas'ud al-Sulami to complete the conquest of Kerman. The capital at Sirjan and the main towns of Bam, Jiruft, and Hurmuz were conquered by a mixture of force and peace. Many inhabitants of the province fled to the mountains or to Makran, where the Qufs aided them, or to Sistan, or overseas. Arabs took possession of the abandoned houses and property, cultivated the land, paid the tithe on it, and dug canals in some places.

The struggle for Khorasan in 651 was a complicated three-way conflict among local officials and notables interested in their own autonomy, the Hephthalites of Badghis and Herat, and the Muslims. The *marzbān* of Marv, Mahuya, received Yazdgerd but resented his demand for the arrears of taxes, and allied with Nezak Tarkhan, the Hephthalite ruler of Badghis. Together they defeated Yazdgerd's retinue outside of Marv. Yazdgerd fled from Marv, but was killed by a miller. Yazdgerd's son, Piruz, took refuge in China. Since Yazdgerd III had no Sasanian royal successor, his regnal years simply continued to be used for dating by Zoroastrians, at first from his accession in 632, and then from his death in 651. It was only in the first year after

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his death, in 652, that Arab-Sasanian replicas of Sasanian coins, usually with the image of Yazdgerd III or that of Khosrow II plus the Arabic slogan *bismillah* ("in the name of God"), began to be struck in Fars.

When Ibn Amir headed for Khorasan from Kerman in 650, he sent al-Ahnaf ibn Qays with the vanguard of Tamimi Arabs and 1,000 *asawira* through Quhistan. The people at Tabasayn had abrogated their treaty and allied with the Hephthalites of Herat. Al-Ahnaf reconquered Quhistan, imposed a heavier tribute of 600,000 dirhams on the province, met and defeated at Nishapur the Hephthalites of Herat who had come to help the Iranians, and was joined by Ibn Amir outside Nishapur. The districts in the territory of Nishapur were conquered by the lieutenants of Ibn Amir, who laid siege to the city of Nishapur (Abarshahr) for a month toward the end of 650. The commander of one of the districts of the city let the Muslims in by opening one of the gates at night. The Muslims occupied the city and besieged the *marzbān* in the citadel (Quhandiz) for about nine months until he surrendered in return for a tribute of 700,000 or one million dirhams. Qays ibn al-Haytham al-Sulami was appointed governor of Nishapur by Ibn Amir, who invaded eastern Khorasan in 651, where terms of peace were arranged with local notables or officials. The *dehqān* of Nasa agreed to pay 300,000 dirhams or as much as the land tax would yield, in return for which no one was to be killed or taken captive. A tribute of 400,000 dirhams was imposed on Abivard, but at Sarakhs the *marzbān*, Zadhuyeh, was besieged by Abdullah ibn Khazim and surrendered after securing a safe-conduct for 100 men but giving up the women to the Muslims. Since the *marzbān* failed to name himself in the safe-conduct, Ibn Khazim killed him, took the *marzbān*'s daughter for himself, and took Sarakhs by force. The *kanarang* or *marzbān* of Tus had asked the Arabs for aid against the Hephthalites of Herat and Badghis who were raiding him. He came to terms with Ibn Amir for a tribute of 600,000 dirhams.

Hephthalite intervention in Khorasan drew Muslim military action against them to secure the Muslim position in Khorasan. After the fall of Tus, Ibn Amir sent an army against Herat, where the ruler (*marzbān* or *azim*) made terms for Herat, Badghis, and Pushang for a tribute of one million dirhams. It was only then that the last Sasanian *marzbān*, Mahuyeh, at Marv came to terms and arranged for a tribute of 1,100,000 dirhams or one million dirhams and 100,000 *jarib*-measures of wheat and barley. The Muslims were to be quartered in the houses at Marv.

In 652, Ibn Amir sent al-Ahnaf ibn Qays from Marv to invade Tukharistan with a force of 4,000 Arabs and 1,000 Iranian Muslims (evidently the Tamimis and *asawira*). This may have been because the ruler of Tukharistan was assisting Piruz. At Marv al-Rud the garrison in the fortress agreed to terms of 300,000 dirhams for the entire district, while the people in the town were besieged. After bloody fighting, the *marzbān* made peace for 60,000 or 600,000 dirhams and a mutual defense pact. The terms also provided for the *marzbān* to keep his ancestral lands, to be exempt from taxes with his family, and for the marzbanate to stay in his family. Al-Ahnaf then beat back an attack by 30,000 men from Guzgan, Taliqan, and Faryab, plus people from Chaghaniyan, in hard fighting with many casualties. The survivors were pursued and defeated, and al-Ahnaf sent a force of Tamimis that conquered

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forces crossed the Oxus River and invaded Central Asia only after Piruz returned to China in 673, where he died in 678/79. Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad was appointed governor of Khorasan directly by Mu'awiya in 673 and crossed the Oxus with an army of 24,000 men in 674. There he laid waste to the oasis of Bukhara, conquered Ramitin and Paykand, defeated a Turkish army that came to help the queen (Khatun) in the city of Bukhara, and made peace with the Khatun for one million dirhams. In 676, Mu'awiya replaced Ubaydullah with Sa'id ibn Uthman as governor of Khorasan. That year, Sa'id crossed the Oxus, defeated a combined force of Sogdians, Turks, and the people of Kish and Nasaf, and occupied Bukhara. From there, he besieged Samarqand for three days with Bukharan help. After hard fighting, he entered the city, and the people in the citadel made peace for 700,000 dirhams. Sa'id took forty or eighty of the sons of their kings as hostages, and after the fall of Samarqand, Termez surrendered. In 681, Yazid I (680–83) appointed Salm ibn Ziyad governor of Khorasan and Sistan. Several thousand Arabs of the tribe of Azd were settled at Marv. Salm is said to have made peace with the people of Khwarazm for 400,000 dirhams and campaigned across the Oxus twice. But his brother Yazid was killed in battle against the Zunbil in 681, and many of his men were killed or captured. Salm ransomed the captives for 500,000 dirhams and sent an army to restore order in Sistan.

The second Muslim civil war, which broke out when Mu'awiya died in 680, lasted for eleven years and put an end to conquest in the east for twenty-five years. Order broke down completely in Khorasan and Sistan after Yazid I died in 683. In a bitter tribal civil war, the Arabs of Tamim drove the Bakr out of Marv to Herat. Tribute was withheld in Central Asia, Khorasan was raided by Hephthalites, and the Zunbil attacked Sistan, but the Arabs defeated and killed him in 685. Muslim Arabs were now to be found among the rebels. The Azraqi sect of Kharijites from Basra marauded through Khuzistan to Fars and Kerman, pursued by Basran forces under al-Muhallab ibn Abi Sufra. From about 689, Azraqites were led by Qatari ibn Fuja'a and used Kerman as a base to return to Khuzistan and lower Iraq. In Central Asia, a rebel Arab enclave was established at Termez by Musa ibn Abdullah ibn Khazim that lasted until 704.

Order was restored in Khorasan and Sistan by the governors of the caliph Abd al-Malik (685–705) from 691. When the governor of Khorasan wished to raid Central Asia in 696 but had no money to provide his soldiers with horses and weapons, the Sogdian merchants at Marv loaned it to him. In 694, al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf was sent as governor of Iraq, and from 697 to 714 he ruled Iraq and Iran for Abd al-Malik as viceroy of the East. Al-Hajjaj changed the language of the tax bureau from Persian to Arabic in Iraq and began to issue reformed epigraphic Islamic dirhams in the east. Al-Hajjaj also settled 80 Arabs of the tribe of Ijl from Kufa as a garrison at Qazvin with their *mawali* (non-Arab Muslims), and other Ijli Arabs settled in Hamadan when he appointed an Ijli as governor there.

As a lieutenant of al-Hajjaj, al-Muhallab drove the Azraqites out of Iraq again back to Kerman. It was there that Qatari struck Arab-Sasanian silver coins in his own name with the caliphal title, "Commander of the Faithful," written in a combination of Arabic and Middle Persian in 694. The Azraqites broke up because of

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dissension between the Arabs and the *mawali* among them. Qatari left for Tabaristan with the Arabs; the *mawali* stayed at Jiruft and were routed by al-Muhallab. The survivors fled east to Sistan, where Kharijite enclaves were to survive for another century and a half. In Tabaristan, Qatari alienated the local people by collecting the poll-tax from them, and the Ispahbadh complained to the governor of Ray, whose troops ambushed the Azraqites in a mountain pass. Qatari was killed, probably in 697/98. The Azrakites who survived fled to a fortress near Qumis, where they were subjected to a long siege by the governor of Ray until their supplies ran out and they were annihilated in a desperate sortie.

To the east of Sistan, a new Zunbil had defeated one Muslim army in 693/94 and massacred another in 697. Al-Hajjaj sent a new army of 40,000 men from Basra and Kufa under Ibn al-Ash'ath in 699. When the latter arrived in Zarang and announced that he would attack the enemies who had been raiding them, he was joined not only by the Arab soldiers but by the people of the market. He invaded Zabulistan, where he set about methodically occupying the territory of the Zunbil by spreading a network of officials, communications, watchtowers, and garrisons, and carried off cattle and sheep. The impatience of al-Hajjaj with his slow progress provoked Ibn al-Ash'ath and his army to rebel and march back to Iraq. They were joined by Arab settlers and local natives in Sistan and by others as they marched through Kerman and Fars. The rebels were defeated by al-Hajjaj in Iraq in 701, and Ibn al-Ash'ath fled back to Sistan and took refuge with the Zunbil. When the latter turned him over to an agent of al-Hajjaj in 704, he threw himself off of a tower and died.

The revolt of Ibn al-Ash'ath was something of a turning point, because afterwards the *asawira* at Basra, who had supported him, were disbanded by al-Hajjaj, who also ruined the *dehqāns* of lower Iraq for the same reason by not repairing their irrigation canals. A group of Alids from Kufa who had been defeated with Ibn al-Ash'ath fled to Qum, where they are said to have been welcomed by the local Persians, settled to the west of Qum, and built a *masjid* where a Zoroastrian fire-temple had been. It was also after the defeat of Ibn al-Ash'ath, from 702 to 705, that al-Hajjaj built a new capital in Iraq at Wasit, between Basra and Kufa, that was garrisoned by Syrian Arabs.

Meanwhile, al-Muhallab had been sent to Khorasan as governor for al-Hajjaj in 697. He was accompanied by many Arabs of his own tribe of Azd, who settled at Nishapur. In Khorasan, the Azd tended to align with the Arabs of Rabi'a with the Bakr against the Tamim and Qays, while al-Muhallab made common cause with the *dehqāns* there. In 699, he crossed the Oxus and raided Central Asia, without much success; Arabs who deserted his army went to join Musa ibn Abdullah at Termez. When al-Muhallab died at Marv al-Rud in 702, he was succeeded by his son Yazid as governor of Khorasan; Yazid also campaigned in Central Asia, but achieved little more than the submission of Nezak at Badghis in 703. It was Yazid's successor who finally managed to defeat and kill Musa ibn Abdullah at Termez by 704.

The actual Muslim conquest of Central Asia was the work of Qutayba ibn Muslim, the governor of Khorasan for al-Hajjaj, in the caliphate of al-Walid I (705–15). Qutayba dealt with the manpower problem caused by the assimilation

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of Arab settlers in the East and by Arab intertribal fighting by conscripting non-Muslims from the cities of Khorasan, organized according to their city of origin, Nishapur, Bivard, Sarakhs, and Herat, for annual summer campaigns against the minor Turkish and Iranian rulers in Central Asia. In 705, Qutayba crossed the Oxus with a Muslim army swollen with conscripts and *mawali* from Khorasan, the forces of Nezak from Badghis, and the *dehqāns* of Balkh, and secured the submission of Chaghaniyan. Paykand was taken in 706, Ramitin in 707, and Bukhara in 709 after heavy fighting. A tribute of 200,000 dirhams was imposed on Bukhara, a Muslim garrison was quartered in the city, and Tugh-shada, son of the *khatun* of Bukhara, was restored as ruler. The more wealthy local people built new villas for themselves outside the city. Qutayba is said to have replaced the fire-temple in the citadel with a *masjid*, required people to worship there, punished those who failed to do so, and rewarded those who did with two dirhams. This naturally attracted the poor of Bukhara. The Qur'an was recited in Persian at first, and a man stood behind the worshippers giving them instructions in Sogdian on how to perform the prostrations.

That winter, Nezak led a coalition of princes in Tukharistan against Qutayba, but was defeated, captured, and killed with 700 followers in 710. The Zunbil was forced to pay tribute in 711, and in 712 Khwarazm was divided between an Arab governor at Gurganj and the local ruler at Kath. Ghurak surrendered at Samarqand after a relief force from Fergana was defeated. A Muslim garrison was stationed in Samarqand to collect the tribute, and Qutayba invaded Shash and Fergana with an army that included Bukharan and Khwarazmian recruits and a unit of local noble archers. He had reached Isfijab by 714, but was killed in an army mutiny in Fergana when he rebelled against al-Walid's successor, Sulayman, in 715.

Yazid ibn al-Muhallab returned as governor of Khorasan under Sulayman (715–17) and reconquered Gurgan from a Turkish ruler in 717 with a army recruited among the natives of Khorasan. But his invasion of Tabaristan was unsuccessful, and he concluded a truce with the Ispabad. A post-Sasanian Iranian nobility had survived in the mountains of Tabaristan, where they preserved their independence until the late eighth century. By the early eighth century, local dynasties of Ispahbadhs, Padhghospans, and Ostandars had emerged in Tabaristan that claimed to be connected to the Sasanians and used Sasanian administrative positions as royal titles.

The pattern of Arab settlement in Iran was also established by the early eighth century. The earliest settlements were military garrisons stationed in strategic places to ensure local security, the collection of tribute, and the routes of communication. On the frontiers, these garrisons tended to receive later waves of settlers as military reinforcements and the retinues of governors. Arab settlement was relatively light in the Jibal and Fars and scattered unevenly throughout western Iran in general, where there were early garrisons at Nahavand, Dinawar, Siravan, Saymara, Qazvin, Qum, Ray, and Ardabil. At Isfahan, the Muslim garrison remained at Jay until ca. 767. Hulwan was garrisoned in 684. The only certain garrison in Fars was that of the Abd al-Qays at Tawwaj. The heaviest military settlement was in the north, facing the

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Khazars and Daylamites. Bardha'a was fortified in the time of Abd al-Malik and served as the main military base for the Muslims in Azerbaijan in the early eighth century. Twenty thousand Syrians were stationed at Darband, and Arran was reinforced with a new Arab garrison in 725, both against the Khazars.

There was also independent Arab settlement in western Iran. Arabs settled at Tabriz and Marand in Azerbaijan and were scattered throughout the environs of Isfahan, where one of the suburbs was settled in the time of al-Walid. Arabs of the Rabi'a and Ijl tribes settled in Hamadan in 696. In Azerbaijan, the Jibal, and Kerman, this also resulted in the creation of a class of Arab landlords. Some of them were established by the land grants made for governors in Kerman and the Jibal by Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad ca. 680. Some of the Banu Ijl who settled near Hamadan in the 730s bought many villages, and there were Arab landlords in the suburbs of Isfahan by 745. In 718, the Alid Arabs who had settled at Qum were given villages, estates, and farms by the local headman, Yezdanfadar, and meadows and water rights in 721. The Arabs are said to have dug over twenty new underground water channels and began to introduce new crops. When Yezdanfadar died in 733, conflict broke out between the Arabs and Persians over water rights, and the Arabs emerged with control of one-third of the water and owning most of the canals. Arabs who migrated from Iraq to Azerbaijan seized or bought land there, and the Persian villagers became their tenants. Azerbaijan also attracted Kharijites from upper Mesopotamia as a place of refuge, and Arabs who escaped from Iraq roamed rural Azerbaijan independently.

Many more Arabs settled on the northeast frontier than anywhere else in Iran. In eastern Iran, there were Arab garrisons at Zarang in Sistan and in virtually every town in Khorasan, but the heaviest Arab settlement was in the villages of the Marv oasis. At Nishapur, Arabs settled in villages and open areas around the city, and the governor built a new village there in 738. The Arab garrison of the tribes of Azd, Bakr, and Tamim at Balkh was stationed outside the city at Baruqan, until the former urban center was rebuilt by the governor in 735 and the garrison was moved back inside the city. In Central Asia, the garrison was spread throughout the city of Bukhara; by 730 there was a garrison of 11,000 men at Samarqand, while tribesmen of Bakr settled in the villages north of Samarqand.

The sheer size of the Arab settlement in the northeast made intertribal conflict more serious. To a certain extent, these conflicts were between earlier settlers who had assimilated to the local population and become demilitarized and bodies of troops that arrived more recently. In 730, the caliph Hisham demobilized about 15,000 Arabs in the army of Khorasan, posted the rest as defensive garrisons on the frontier, and sent a new army of 20,000 Iraqis to Marv. Many Arabs possessed land in the villages of Khorasan and settled there with the families they brought from Iraq or married local women. The physical effects of intermarriage were noted in the ninth century by al-Jahiz, who says, "when you see an Arab in Khorasan with a fair moustache, a reddish complexion and a thick neck, you may be sure he is descended from a Bedouin of quite different characteristics who came and settled in the area."[4]

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By the 720s and 730s, there was increasing resentment in Khorasan and Central Asia on the part of non-Arab converts to Islam and demilitarized Arab Muslims who found themselves subject to the payment of taxes collected by the Iranian *dehqāns*. After the death of Yazid ibn al-Muhallab in 720, the South Arabian Azd were alienated as a result of tribal politics. A revolt by the Azd in Tukharistan was suppressed near Balkh, but in 724 the Muslim governor was defeated by the Turks in Fergana when the Azd in his army deserted. Kharijite raids became endemic in Sistan. The Sogdian princes and converts joined the Turks, who intervened in Central Asia from 728 to 731 accompanied by a descendent of Yazdgerd III called Khosrow. In 734, al-Harith ibn Surayj of Tamim led a revolt of the 4,000 Arab soldiers who had been posted to Guzgan. He was joined by the Hephthalites of Guzgan, Faryan, and Talaqan and by the Arab garrison at Marv al-Rud. He is said to have summoned people to "the Book of God and the example (*sunna*) of the Prophet," and to have supported equal rights for Iranian converts. His revolt attracted Arabs opposed to the government, *dehqān*s, and Iranians in general. When the new garrison at Marv defeated him, he joined the Turks and was with them when they defeated the Muslims in Central Asia in 737, crossed the Oxus, and invaded Khorasan, where they were defeated by the Arabs and Hephthalites at Kharistan. Al-Harith survived until he died in battle in 746. The Turkish state collapsed after the ruler died in 738, and the Muslims managed to reoccupy Central Asia by 741 under the governor of Khorasan, Nasr ibn Sayyar, with 20,000 Sogdian conscripts. It was also Nasr ibn Sayyar who changed the language of administration in Khorasan and Central Asia from Persian to Arabic in 742.

During the second quarter of the eighth century, the discontents on the northeastern frontier were exploited by Arab and Persian agents from Kufa working secretly on behalf of the Abbasid family, but using the slogan of "action according to the Book of God and the example of His Prophet" as other rebels did. The Abbasid agents were active among the demilitarized Arab settlers and merchants in Khorasan who were paying taxes to Iranian notables and susceptible to Abbasid propaganda. The agents also entered into a tactical alliance with Shiʿis. Because the Abbasid movement proved to be successful, it has been called a "revolution," and it has been variously interpreted as a nationalist rising by Iranian converts to Islam (*mawali*) against Arabs, as a revolt by demilitarized Arabs and South Arab tribesmen in the army of Khorasan, as a reaction by Arab settlers and garrisons in peripheral areas against the army of the central government in Marv, as a populist Khorasanian movement, and as an alliance between soldiers and merchants. It can also be said that it was a Muslim revolt by Arabs and Iranians in Khorasan against the Umayyad caliphate in Damascus, and that the Abbasid movement was only one of many contending forces that enveloped the entire Islamic empire during the third Muslim civil war from 744 to 750. The Umayyad dynastic crisis in 744 was the opportunity the opposition had been waiting for; every faction or sect tried to turn the confusion to its own advantage. The last Umayyad caliph, Marwan II (744–50), defeated Kharijite and Shiʿi rebels in the central provinces and in western Iran by 747 and was ready to intervene in Khorasan, where Nasr ibn Sayyar had repeatedly warned him of what was happening and urged him to send forces.

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That may have been the reason that the Abbasid agents decided to come out into the open and strike before Marwan's troops could reach Khorasan. In June of 747, the Abbasids' Persian agent, Abu Muslim, raised their black banners in a village near Marv, where he was joined by Arab settlers, south Arab tribesmen, and Iranian converts. He is said to have recruited 7,000 soldiers within a month and registered them according to where they lived. By 748, they were in control of Marv and had driven Nasr out of Khorasan. The Abbasid army marched west under an Arab general, meeting and defeating in central and western Iran two armies Marwan II sent from Syria. It invaded Iraq, where a member of the Abbasid family was proclaimed caliph in the *masjid* of Kufa (al-Saffah, 749–54) in the fall of 749. The disappointed pro-Shi'i agents in the movement were purged in 750; Marwan was defeated in upper Iraq, pursued, caught, and killed in Egypt. The Abbasid movement was successful because it was the best organized, the furthest from Damascus, and the least scrupulous.

The Khorasanian army stayed in Iraq and eventually settled at the new Abbasid capital founded at Baghdad by the caliph al-Mansur (754–75) in 758. For half a century, armies recruited in Khorasan and settled in Baghdad were the backbone of Abbasid military forces. Al-Mansur's army invaded Tabaristan in 759 and occupied the towns in the lowlands, where Amul was made the provincial capital; the Ispahbadh paid tribute for the highlands. The Abbasid governors continued the Sasanian-style coinage of the Ispahbadhs until 791. Al-Mansur also encouraged volunteers to fight the Daylamis, who continued to raid Qazvin; he sent forces to defend Armenia against the Khazars, and settled Arabs of the tribe of Hamdan near Tabriz. However, several Arab enclaves in Azerbaijan remained virtually independent under their lords until the ninth century.

In western Iran, the early Abbasid caliphs engaged in the selective development of particular places, such as Isfahan, Ray, Qazvin, and Qum, as provincial urban centers. They built walls, new residential districts, *masjid*s, and citadels, and associated the emerging elite of local notables and merchants with the regime. From about 767, the governor of Isfahan rebuilt Yahudiyya as a new administrative and military center. At Ray, new districts and *masjid*s were founded from 775, and a wall was built around the expanded city. Qum was independent and did not pay taxes from 750 until 800, when the attempt to collect taxes provoked a rebellion. After it was suppressed, Qum was made the capital of a new province created by taking districts from the provinces of Ray, Hamadan, and Isfahan. A new *masjid* of Imam Hasan was built there in 806. At Qazvin, new suburbs where Arab families settled were built under al-Hadi (785–86), and al-Rashid (786–809) built a *masjid* and began to build a wall around the urban area. In 805, Qazvin was also made the capital of a province by adding districts from Hamadan to its territory.

The main focus of Abbasid interest was the cities along the Khorasan road, where political and economic power was concentrated. The special relationship between the Abbasids and Khorasan was at its height during the caliphate of al-Rashid, when his vizier, Yahya ibn Khalid ibn Barmak (d. 805), practically ruled the empire with his two sons, al-Fadl and Ja'far, for seventeen years, from 786 to 803. An

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emerging Islamic urban society with an artisan and commercial economy and moneyed upper classes, allied with the older landlord and bureaucratic classes, supported the Abbasid regime in the east and favored stability, order, and a form of Islamic law that sanctioned the interests of merchants.

The growing distance between the urban upper classes and the urban and rural poor was reflected in a series of socio-religious opposition movements in the countryside during the early Abbasid period that expressed the resentment of tenant farmers toward their landlords, whether the latter were Arab or Iranian, Muslim or non-Muslim. Because these movements tended to draw their followers from both Zoroastrians and Muslims, their religious doctrines tended to be syncretistic. The oppressed rural classes also joined the Kharijites in Sistan and the Alids in Khorasan and Daylam. These movements seem to have begun with the revolt of a Zoroastrian priest named Bihafrid, who declared that he was a prophet, at Nishapur in 746/47. It was the Zoroastrian priests themselves who called on Abu Muslim to defeat him, which he did after he took Nishapur in 749.

The execution of Abu Muslim himself by al-Mansur in 755 set off a series of revolts that used his name as a pretext or a symbol. The first was led by a non-Muslim called Sunbadh, who had been close to Abu Muslim. It broke out at Nishapur in 755, lasted for seventy days, combined Zoroastrian and Islamic ideas, was joined by both Muslims and Zoroastrians, as well as dissatisfied people in general, and attracted supporters from Tabaristan and farmers from the Jibal. They went from Nishapur to Ray, where they took possession of Abu Muslim's treasure. Sunbadh sent some of it to Khurshid, the Ispahbadh of Tabaristan, along with a present of six million dirhams. The caliph, al-Mansur, sent an army of 10,000 men against him at Ray. The caliphal force was joined by a local butcher called Umar ibn al-Ala, who raised a large group of volunteers and was decisive in the battle where Sunbadh was defeated. Sunbadh fled and took refuge with Khurshid in Tabaristan, who later had him killed. Sunbadh's followers survived as a clandestine religious sect.

The revolt of Ishaq the Turk in Central Asia from about 755 to 757 was also in the name of Abu Muslim, whom he said had been sent by Zoroaster as a hidden messiah to restore Zoroastrianism. This was followed by the revolt at Badghis of Ustadhsis, who combined the teachings of Bihafrid with revenge for the death of Abu Muslim. Ustadhsis drew followers from Herat, Badghis, and Sistan, but was defeated, caught, and executed in 768, although his followers survived. Yusuf al-Barm, who led a revolt in Sistan and Central Asia, began as a Kharijite, but, when he was driven out of Pushang in about 776 and fled to Bukhara, he joined a syncretistic Zoroastrian-Islamic movement called the Khurramdin ("Happy Religion"). Upon his return from Central Asia, he and many of his followers were taken captive by the governor of Sistan, sent to Baghdad, and executed. The last in this series was al-Muqanna ("the veiled one"), who proclaimed that he was a reincarnation of Abu Muslim and earlier prophets via the transmigration of souls. His movement started at Marv, but in 775 he went to Kish and Nakhshab in Central Asia, where the supporters of Abu Muslim were numerous. He was joined by many followers, who wore white clothing, and attracted pastoralist Turks. The movement was anti-Abbasid

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CHAPTER 9

MEDIEVAL IRAN

NEGUIN YAVARI

In 632, the year the last Sasanian (224–651) monarch, Yazdgerd III (r. 632–51), was crowned, the nascent Islamic community of Arabia lost its Prophet and leader. Within fifty years, the political and social maps of the Middle East and adjacent lands would be redrawn. The Arab conquest dramatically altered the social, cultural, religious, and political landscape of the region, which had long been overshadowed by events on the Iranian Plateau. Sasanian military forces failed to stage a creditable or united resistance to the Islamic conquests, and each province or city had to fend for itself. Iranians by and large shed their old customs and converted to Islam before the end of the tenth century, although myriad vestiges of Iranian culture and thought worked their way into the mosaic of Islamic civilization. The Arabs left intact the landowning system, an important strand of the social fabric in Iranian provinces, on the premise that seizing the land made it subject to Muslim rules for the division of spoils of war drafted in Medina, and thus exempt from a multitude of taxes levied on non-Muslim property owners. Finally—and unlike other conquered peoples who played a significant role in the evolution of Muslim societies, like the Egyptians—the people of Iran maintained a specific form of national consciousness, exemplified in the uninterrupted use of the Persian language as the spoken lingua franca of the eastern part of the empire and beyond, and the periodic revitalization of a national Iranian past to influence and modify political and theological discourse in the Islamic context. What emerged in the sixteenth century with the Safavid dynasty (1501–1722) was an inflection of Persian identity, which had been marked by linguistic, ethnic and historical differences, with yet another element of difference. While certain Iranian cities, such as Qum and Ray, were Shiʿi strongholds from early on, the vast majority of Iranian lands, and especially the all-important province of Khorasan in the northeast, remained bastions of Sunni orthodoxy. The conversion of Iran to Shiʿism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries entailed a protracted transformation, not just of the country's religious and

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social history but also of the Shi'i creed and dogma. That Iran and post-sixteenth-century Shi'ism were confined to demarcated political borders, while Sunnism and Arabs were dispersed across several national boundaries, had dramatic consequences for the development of (both religious and secular) political thought and institutions in Iran, most notably demonstrated in the Iranian revolution of 1979. In the past 500 years, Iran and Shi'ism have been shaped by a convergence of influences and trends that emerged in earlier centuries.

It took the Arab armies almost two decades to conquer the various regions of Iran, and this they accomplished with the assistance of a good number of Iranian soldiers and men of higher status, whose livelihood was threatened after the downfall of the Sasanians. The Sasanian capital—Ctesiphon in modern-day Iraq—fell in 637; another decisive battle was fought in Nahavand, some forty miles south of the modern city of Hamadan in 642 (or 639 according to some sources); and the major cities of Khorasan capitulated between 651 and 653. Yazdgerd III was killed in 651, during the caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan (r. 644–56), and with his demise came the official end of the Sasanian dynasty. Very little is known about the social history of Iran in the first century of Islamic rule. This reflects the triumphalist nature of the conquest literature, which was produced to document the submission of the Iranian lands rather than to chart their history. Most of the primary sources of the medieval period deal extensively with the tribal and administrative organization of the conquering armies and their military strategies, but are silent on the social and cultural history of the conquered regions. The energies of the first dynasty of Islam, the Umayyads (661–750), were spent primarily on building and fostering state institutions and the requisite infrastructure of governance. Moreover, as I shall elaborate below, almost all of what we know about Umayyad history derives from sources produced in later centuries. For obvious reasons, their successors, the Abbasids (750–1258), were not much interested in producing a judicious account of the Umayyads. The later historical canon painted them as immoral, unethical, and unfaithful to the path of true Islam. Few and far between are historical accounts that credit the Umayyads for building the state infrastructure, promoting Arabic as the language of government and administration in addition to its role as the sacred language of Islam, and expanding the Islamic domains. The Umayyad family is accused of being late converts to Islam, having submitted to the new faith only after it had become clear that the Prophet's mission would be successful. They were also accused of preventing the conversion of the empire's population, presumably to benefit from the heavier tax burdens borne by non-Muslims. The Umayyad army's murder of the Prophet's grandson, al-Husayn, in 680 and attacks on the holy cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina, did not help their image either. But worst of all was the charge of tyranny and godlessness, which is why the overwhelming majority of medieval Muslim sources refer to them as kings rather than caliphs. In sum, medieval historiography on the Umayyads justified the Abbasid uprising against fellow Muslims by casting doubt on their piety, probity, and adherence to the tradition of Muhammad and the ideals of Islam.

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The Abbasid revolution of the mid-eighth century involved heavy Khorasanian participation, but its purpose was to overthrow the Umayyad dynasty. The ruling family, descendants of al-Abbas (d. 652 or 655 according to some sources), Muhammad's uncle, promised to restore the caliphate to its rightful owners, the family of the Prophet, and in the process deliver justice and prosperity to Muslims and glory to Islam. The Abbasids exploited the grievances of two important dissatisfied groups: those who believed that the rightful heir to the Prophet should be a family member, and the Khorasanians, Persians as well as Arab immigrants, who had arrived during Umayyad rule. Khorasan's rise to being perhaps the most crucial and certainly the most coveted Iranian province is itself one of the dramatic structural changes initiated by the Muslim conquests, for the core of historical *Ērānshahr* and certainly the Sasanian Empire was in Mesopotamia and its environs. After the success of the revolution, the Abbasids quickly moved to eliminate rival claimants to the caliphate. These included the Alid branch of the Prophet's family, who sought to establish the caliphate for the descendants of Abu Talib, another of the Prophet's uncles. Abu Talib's son Ali (r. 656–61) was not only the fourth caliph of Islam but also Muhammad's son-in-law, and is considered the first imam by Shi'is. Only by defeating the Alid branch could the Abbasids claim Muhammad's legacy. The Abbasids also moved to eliminate the Khorasanian faction in the army. The best-known Khorasanian military leader was Abu Muslim al-Khurasani, a commander stationed in Baghdad after the fall of the Umayyads who had overreached himself, in Abbasid eyes, and was murdered at the order of the second Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur (r. 754–75), in 755. The murder of Abu Muslim reverberated throughout the region; between 755 and 780, no fewer than five uprisings occurred in Iran associated in one way or another with his legacy. The Abbasid movement was successful because of Khorasanian involvement, but the general picture emerging from the earliest sources (not contemporary with these events) does not suggest a political worldview imbued with nationalist or ethnic opposition to foreign rule. In any case, the modern concept of nationalist aspirations cannot be applied to the study of group identity, communal bonds, and ethnic fraternity in premodern societies.

By joining with the Abbasids, the Khorasanians helped bring to power a new political dynasty with a palpably different ideological message. While the Umayyads set in place the empire's institutional and bureaucratic infrastructure, the Abbasids from the very beginning espoused a universalist and imperial worldview and marketed it to their variegated constituencies throughout the Islamic lands, including Aramaic-speaking Christians and Jews, native Greeks and Persians, Syriac speakers, a substantial Turkic population, and still others. In promoting this particular understanding of Zoroastrian Sasanian ideology, al-Mansur sought to appease the Khorasanian elite and to consolidate Abbasid rule after a tumultuous revolution and civil war. He moved the capital to Baghdad, the architecture of which he personally supervised; initiated a large-scale translation project that in its earliest stages focused on works on political astrology and medicine; and brought to power the first vizieral dynasty of Islam, the Barmakids. Hailing from a Buddhist Iranian priestly family of

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Iran and the bearers of that notion over the centuries? The question of a cultural unit, conscious and discernible in historical texts, is tied incontrovertibly to the issue of sources and to historical method. Most of what we know about pre-Sasanian Iran, the Achaemenid (549–330 BC), Seleucid (312–129 BC), and Parthian (247 BC–224 AD) periods, for instance, and excepting a small amount of archaeological data, comes from the Greeks, who were Iran's sustained political rivals for centuries and rarely wrote with much authority or rigor about their archenemies, and especially about Iran's eastern provinces, of which they had little firsthand knowledge. Sasanian and Umayyad history was recorded in the ninth and tenth centuries by historians of the Abbasid period. In a supremely ironic manner, then, the concept of Iran, a semi-ethnic/national/linguistic identity that persevered over millennia in the face of innumerable obstacles, extended periods of foreign rule, and seismic religious upheavals, was itself only fashioned in the Islamic era, for no historical narrative, however unreliable or primeval, has reached us from its long pre-Islamic past. The idea that Muslim or even Arab rule sought to suppress and obliterate the Iranian cultural or other legacy needs to be put to rest. In fact, and as observed by several scholars of changes in Near Eastern society in the transition from Late Antiquity to the Islamic era, the unification of a vast expanse of land stretching from North Africa to India brought about the elimination of internal borders and various orders of separation, including social, religious, national, and ethnic divides.

Almost the entire corpus of historical literature on the Sasanian era, apart from the limited collection of writings by Christian and Jewish scholars, dates to the late ninth and tenth centuries and is overwhelmingly in Arabic, and only by the tenth century in Persian. Similarly, the traditional view of Iranian history in the early Islamic period has been that Iranian national identity was suppressed initially and reemerged slowly in the tenth century, under the patronage of the Samanid dynasty, consisting of local rulers of Khorasan and Persian speakers, who defeated the Tahirids and gained recognition from the caliphate in Baghdad as legitimate overlords of the province loyal to the Abbasids. Under Samanid patronage, Persian was revived as a literary language. Most modern historians, irrespective of their nationality, have generally accepted the initial suppression and revivification model of Iranian national identity. Rudaki (d. ca. 940 or ca. 950), the celebrated Khorasanian poet whose poetry is mostly lost, and Bal'ami (d. 974 according to some accounts), the historian charged with translating Tabari's (d. 923) great universal history, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa al-muluk* (History of Prophets and Kings), into Persian, are often cited as pioneers. It is important to note here that "national origin" provides a distorting lens for the exploration of ideologies and worldviews. There are two hypotheses about Bal'ami's ethnic background in the medieval sources. One is that his family descended from the Arab tribe of Tamim and resided in Asia Minor. A second is that the family originated in Bal'aman, in the vicinity of Marv, in present-day Afghanistan. Tabari, on the other hand, was from Amul, a town in the medieval northern Iranian province of Tabaristan, currently named Mazandaran. Both men, like most Iranian Muslims of the tenth century, were Sunnis. They were more or less contemporaries. Furthermore, the adaptation of Tabari's oeuvre under Bal'ami's

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source, the fountainhead for alien wisdom and novel ideas, innovations and heresies, more or less analogous to what the Greek literati sought during the period following Alexander's conquests. In theology, for instance, rationalism, which was espoused first by the Mu'tazili school that emerged in Baghdad in the ninth century and emphasized the necessity of God's justice and rationality, was an Iranian legacy. Elements of Manichaean cosmological speculations fascinated ninth-century Muslim theologians, who employed an Islamicized version of the theory of creation to counter the arguments of their foes in Baghdad, the literal-minded Hanbalis. The Mu'tazilis referred to the Hanbalis as rabble-rousers, dregs of society who rejected rational argumentation and sophisticated extrapolations on the nature and essence of divinity and who had fallen into the trap of anthropomorphism. The Mu'tazili belletrist al-Jahiz (d. 868 or 869), in his satirical *Al-Bukhala'* (Misers), compares the zealous piety and denunciation of worldly desire of the hadith-minded Hanbalis to the behavior of misers. The Hanbalis, in turn, accused the Mu'tazilis of *zandaqa*, or heresy, for their affinities with the speculative theology favored by the Manichaean thinkers of the fifth and sixth centuries. The term *zandaqa* itself, used in Muslim theological literature to designate heresy and unbelief, derives from *zand*, the commentary on the *Avesta*, and was a designation reserved by the Zoroastrian scholars for Manicheans. By allying themselves with the Abbasid caliphs against the emerging class of jurists who sought to impose orthodoxy not on the theological plane but rather in legal interpretations and tenets, collectively known as the sharia, the Mu'tazilis succeeded in establishing a shared vocabulary and platform for the launching of social and intellectual critique in the medieval Muslim world. Even though the Mu'tazili creed was replaced by later orthodoxies, its influence lingers in present-day Muslim theological debates.

The arenas in which Iranian motifs, topoi, and allusions were used are manifold. In the context of medieval Islamic history, one of the more pressing questions facing political theorists was the fragmentation of political power and the decline in Abbasid rule. Muslim historians of the medieval period credited the Sasanians with the forging of Iran as a political, religious, and cultural concept, unifying Zoroastrianism and Aryan ethnicity, which reached its apotheosis in the concept of *Ērānshahr*, so abundant in Zoroastrian writings preserved from the Islamic period and designated as the land of those who are obedient to king and religion, and with serving the Sasanian policy of political centralization and unification of eastern and western Iran. Against the Seleucids, heirs to Alexander's empire, and their successors, the Parthians, who ruled as a confederacy of quasi-independent principalities, the Sasanians, at least in the imagination of medieval Muslim historians, restored a centralized and unified polity in which cultural production flourished.

The recalling of Sasanian motifs and the idealization of theories of kingship attributed to Sasanian dynasts and their ideological allies, the Zoroastrian priesthood, were not unrelated to the Abbasid claim of reviving Sasanian universalism, discussed previously. The intellectual effort to bolster strong and effective rulership was couched in pre-Islamic Iranian metaphors. An early example is found in the writings of Ibn al-Muqaffa (d. ca. 757), a Persian convert employed as a translator

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interesting in Nizam al-Mulk's discussion is that the twinning of religion and kingship is then attributed to, in addition to Ardashir, paradigmatic Muslim exemplars. To bolster his argument and augment its authority, Nizam al-Mulk brings in sayings from Aristotle; Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 778), the famous Muslim theologian and ascetic; the Qur'an (26:14); Luqman, the legendary sage; and the renowned preacher and ascetic of the Umayyad period, Hasan al-Basri (d. 728). Nizam al-Mulk then lists the kings who have wedded divine grace, sovereignty, and knowledge, and have therefore found happiness in both worlds and will be blessed until resurrection: Afridun, pre-Islamic king of the legendary Kiyanid dynasty; Alexander; Ardashir; Khosrow I Anushirvan the Just; Umar ibn al-Khattab (r. 634–44), one of the Prophet's closest companions, his son-in-law and father-in-law, and the second caliph of Islam. The list also includes Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (r. 717–20), the only Umayyad dynast remembered for his piety and justice in medieval Islamic sources; Harun al-Rashid (r. 786–809); and his son al-Ma'mun (r. 813–33), whose controversial reign aroused charges of unorthodoxy on at least three fronts. Ma'mun was accused of Iranian proclivities because he had a Persian mother, spent a good deal of his life in Khorasan, and used the province's military might to eliminate his older brother Amin (r. 809–13), Harun's first heir apparent. He seized the caliphate by ignoring the protocol of succession set down by his father, and meddled with its natural order again when he appointed in 816, albeit briefly, the eighth Shi'i imam, Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (d. 818), as heir apparent, but subsequently had him murdered. In 821, the Sunni caliph declared Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth caliph of Islam and the first imam of Shi'is, and Ali al-Rida's ancestor, to be the most excellent of the Prophet's companions and worthier than the first three caliphs, Abu Bakr (r. 632–34), Umar ibn al-Khattab, and Uthman ibn Affan. He thus reversed the established Abbasid policy of undermining Alid pretensions to leadership. Finally, Ma'mun sought to combat the clerical control of Islamic legitimacy and monopoly on the interpretation of God's will by launching an inquisition (*mihna*), which sought to enforce a standard interpretation of Islam throughout the empire but only further discredited both the Abbasid dynasty and its ideological allies, the Mu'tazila. Nizam al-Mulk's list concludes with Isma'il ibn Ahmad the Samanid prince (r. 892–907) and Sultan Mahmud the Ghaznavid. The point is clear: the vizier is not simply referring to a pre-Islamic or Iranian heritage. Rather, he is mobilizing a particular political ideology, which exhorts and empowers the king to have a decisive say in the settling of religious affairs and the interpretation of God's will, and attributing it to Muslim and non-Muslim leaders of the past. By stringing together legend and history, caliph and sultan, politician and pietist, conqueror and vanquished, Muslim and pagan, Arab and Persian and Turk, the author is aiming to dissolve national, ethnic, religious, and political boundaries. His strategy is not to juxtapose Iranian or pre-Islamic historical vignettes with Islamic ones but to demonstrate their coexistence and compatibility. Furthermore, and under the guise of the neutral and equalizing concept of brotherhood, Nizam al-Mulk is arguing for the necessity of reason as a guide to religious understanding. The king and the clerics may well be cast as brothers, but if the king is to oversee religious affairs he must seek knowledge and wisdom and share it with the clerics, so as to protect religion from

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perfidy and heresy. Without wisdom, religion will not thrive. Its mere juxtaposition with wisdom in almost every specimen of medieval Islamic advice literature confirms wisdom's equivalence with the political and thus secular domain. To regulate the affairs of this world and consequently those of the next, the king needs, before all else, reason and grace (*hilm*).

Nizam al-Mulk's support and encouragement of Sufism, the one religious movement of the medieval period that decried sectarian affiliation, and his fostering of educational institutions were important pillars of his political ideology. Strong and effective rulership was secured not just in the military sphere but in the intellectual one as well. The ideological hegemony that evolved after the theological, legal, and political turbulence that characterized the Muslim polity until the early fourteenth century had subsided was very much dependent on the rise of institutionalized Sufism, as manifested in the institution of the *khanqah* (Sufi hospice or meeting house), and a locally funded and supported infrastructure for the transmission of religious knowledge, in the form of madrasas, colleges devoted to the training of jurists and theologians. Both *khanqah* and madrasa emerged first in northeastern Iran, in the province of Khorasan, and migrated to Iraq, Syria, and Egypt and then to the rest of the Islamic world. Both were expressions of local Islam, institutions that developed in response to the void created by the absence of a centralized Islamic authority. The Sufi *khanqah* afforded ordinary Muslims an increasingly legitimate space to engage with a more spiritualist and enticing vision of Islam, and to rise above sectarian infighting that had engulfed adherents of the legal and theological schools that arose after the fall of the caliphate as legitimate successors to the piety of Muhammad. Sufi spirituality also diminished the appeal of Isma'ilism and other esoteric theological doctrines. The madrasa provided a venue for cooperation of the Muslim clergy with statesmen and rulers, on whose patronage they depended. Both are to be understood as social institutions for the articulation of pragmatism, which more than any other ideological framework guided the discursive universe of Muslim intellectuals who sought to grapple with tyranny as well as the political and ideological ills of their period. Against the backdrop of religious and ideological coagulation, the absence of centralized rule and almost total atrophy that characterized the Muslim polity in the Abbasid period, political theorists recalled bygone eras in which sagacious kings ruled judiciously with foresight and vision, intellectual activity, and debate. They warned of the dangers of tyranny and partisanship and strove to protect the moral sanctity of the commonwealth of Muslims against uncouth and barbaric invaders and to set straight the affairs of religion and state. The intellectual props and linguistic scaffolding of this project drew, to a very large degree, on themes from Iranian history and cultural legacy. In this perhaps mostly imagined geography of an Iranian *jahiliya* (pre-Islamic condition), the effects of the concept of Iran on the development of Islamic society are most deeply felt. And this imagined past, sanctioned by communal memory, has been mobilized in the past two centuries to articulate Islamic and Muslim responses to colonialism and globalization; here again the concept of Iran—now Shi'i—has been in the vanguard.

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CHAPTER 10

THE MONGOLS IN IRAN

GEORGE E. LANE

IRAN was dramatically brought into the Mongol sphere of influence toward the end of the second decade of the thirteenth century. As well as the initial traumatic military incursions, Iran also experienced the start of prolonged martial rule, followed later by the domination and rule of the Mongol Ilkhans. However, what began as a brutal and vindictive invasion and occupation developed into a benign and culturally and economically flourishing period of unity and strength. The Mongol period in Iranian history provokes controversy and debate to this day. From the horrors of the initial bloody irruptions, when the first Mongol-led armies rampaged across northern Iran, to the glory days of the Ilkhanate-Yuan axis, when the Mongol-dominated Persian and Chinese courts dazzled the world, the Mongol influence on Iran of this turbulent period was profound.

The Mongols not only affected Iran and southwestern Asia but they also had a devastating effect on eastern Asia, Europe, and even North Africa. In many parts of the world, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas in particular, the Mongols' name has since become synonymous with murder, massacre, and marauding mayhem. They became known as Tatars or Tartars in Europe and Western Asia for two reasons. Firstly, until Genghis Khan destroyed their dominance, the Tatars were the largest and most powerful of the Turco-Mongol tribes. And secondly, in Latin *Tartarus* meant hell and these tribes were believed to have issued from the depths of Hades.

Their advent has been portrayed as a bloody "bolt from the blue" that left a trail of destruction, death, and horrified grief in its wake. Contemporary accounts paint a consistent picture of the shock and awe experienced by so many on their first encounter with this "storm from the east." The Armenian cleric and historian Kirakos (d. 1272) describes the Tatars' arrival thus:

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> It seems to me that even if many other [authors] narrate the same events, they will nonetheless all be found lacking, for the evils which afflicted all lands are more than can be related. For this is the end of time; and precursors have spoken about the antichrist and the arrival of the sons of destruction.... [O]ur patriarch, saint Nerses prophetically spoke about the destruction of Armenia by the Nation of the Archers, destruction and ruin encompassing all lands, which we have witnessed with our own eyes.... A few years after the destruction of [Ganja], this fanatical and wily army divided up by lot all the lands of Armenia, Georgia, and [Azerbaijan], each chief according to his importance receiving cities, districts, lands, and fortresses in order to take, demolish, and ruin them. Each [chief] went to his allotted area with his wives, sons, and military equipment where they remained without a care polluting and eating all the vegetation with their camels and livestock. (Kirakos)

A medieval Russian chronicle from Novgorod vividly describes their impact on the region:

> No one exactly knows who they are, nor whence they came out, nor what their language is, nor of what race they are, nor what their faith is...God alone knows.[1]

A thirteenth-century Persian eyewitness succinctly summarized their initial impact in Iran: "They came, they sapped, they burnt, they slew, they plundered and they departed."[2] The Arab chronicler Ibn al-Athir, though not an eyewitness, described his emotions on hearing of the Mongols' advent in words that have echoed down through history and colored half the world's future generations' perception of the Eurasian hordes.

> O would that my mother had never borne me, that I had died before and that I were forgotten [so] tremendous disaster such as had never happened before, and which struck all the world, though the Muslims above all...*Dadjdjal* [Muslim Anti-Christ] will at least spare those who adhere to him, and will only destroy his adversaries. These [Mongols], however, spared none. They killed women, men, children, ripped open the bodies of the pregnant and slaughtered the unborn.[3]

This negative and awesome impression created by the Mongol invasion was welcomed and probably deliberately created by the invaders. Chinggis Khan (1167–1227) even described himself as "the Punishment of God" and was happy that others saw him in this role. The Mongol period is noted not only for its supposed barbarity but also for the plethora of historians and chroniclers it produced, many of them writing in Persian. These many scribes, both within the Mongol camp and outside it, were happy to pander to the Mongols' desire for notoriety and a reputation for barbarism and cruelty. However, since the renowned Princeton historian Bernard Lewis questioned the basis of the poisoned reputation of the Mongols in 1995, scholarly opinion has grown more sympathetic toward the legacy of Chinggis Khan.

By 1206, the Turco-Mongol clans of the steppe were united under the charismatic rule of Chinggis Khan. It was the size and unity of this force and its endurance that distinguished it from previous steppe armies. Prior to Chinggis Khan,

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northwestern China. The Qara Khitai were related to the Khitans of northern China, who had already helped the Mongols defeat the Jin or Jurchen, whom they viewed as oppressors and usurpers of the Khitans' ancestral lands.

It should be remembered that the first Turco-Mongol invasion, the "forgotten" Turco-Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century, was generally accepted and sometimes even welcomed by the Islamic world, and that the Qara Khitai had no problem recruiting Muslim Uyghurs to their infidel administration. Qadi Imam Ibn Mahmud Uzjandi, a Persian notable, "saw the rectitude of seeking connections with the Khitai,"[6] while Arudi Samarqandi observed that "[the Ghurkhan's] justice had no bounds, nor was there any limit to the effectiveness of his commands, and indeed, in these two things lies the essence of kingship."[7] The Qara Khitai leadership, though infidel, had always been sympathetic and supportive to their Muslim subjects, and hence they had always received the support and approval of the caliph and the rest of the Islamic world.[8] However after the Qara Khitai leadership had welcomed into their court Küchlüg, the Naiman fugitive from the newly victorious armies of Chinggis Khan, their demise was inevitable. Küchlüg very quickly insinuated himself into the Qara Khitai royal family, exploiting their goodwill and his noble connections, and once a marriage had been established he conspired with the Qara Khitai's neighbor, the Khwarazmshah, and seized the throne. Once in control, Küchlüg reversed the tolerant religious policies of his predecessors and instigated a reign of terror and oppression against his Muslim subjects, apparently unopposed by the Khwarazmshah, who considered himself a rival if not enemy of the caliph of Baghdad.

Well aware of this emerging situation in eastern Turkistan, the lands of the Uyghurs, Chinggis Khan dispatched his top general, the *noyan* Jebe, with a small force to hunt down the fugitive Küchlüg. The Muslims of the former lands of the Qara Khitai welcomed Noyan Jebe and his Mongol troops as liberators and it was not long before their hated oppressor, Küchlüg, was captured and subjected to a fitting end. He was dragged to the square in front of Kashgar's Friday mosque and, in a reenactment of his own execution of the city's imam, he was publicly crucified to the gates of the Jama mosque. The Mongols were welcomed not only by the Muslims of the province but by the Turco-Mongol Khitans, who as descendants of the Liao, the original exiles from northern China, saw the Mongols as their potential saviors and as liberators of their ancestral lands.

In 1125, the Liao dynasty, which had ruled northern China since 907, was overthrown by the Jurchens or Jin, along with the Chinese Song dynasty. The Song royal family fled south and established their capital in Hangzhou, whereas the Khitans, led by Prince Yelü Dashi, fled westward, eventually settling in eastern Turkistan, where after the decisive victory at the battle of Qatwan in 1141 against the Great Saljuq, Sanjar, they were accepted as part of the Dar al-Islam.

This initial victory of the Mongols over Küchlüg was greatly welcomed by both the Muslims and the Khitans, who saw the opportunities now opening for them. For the Khitans there was the opportunity to return in triumph to their ancestral lands, and for the Muslim Uyghurs there was the opportunity for positions in the

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detailed study of the available sources that aims to uncover the reality beneath the adjectives and adverbs. Charles Melville's lecture at the Indo-Mongolian Society, New York University, on the impact of the invasion concludes that the devastation and brutality of the Mongol invasion has been much overstated and that this exaggeration was welcomed by the Mongols themselves, who enjoyed and benefited from their fearsome reputation. It should also be borne in mind that just as the Muslim former subjects of the Qara Khitai welcomed Noyan Jebe and the initial Mongol advance, so too did many of the merchants, local governors, and disgruntled commanders under the nominal rule of the Khwarazmshah welcome the embracing power from the east that would open up frontiers long locked in danger and warfare. Though devastating, much of the devastation occurred in the mind rather than on the ground.

However, Chinggis was astute enough to realize that continued pillage and killing in order to satisfy the material needs of his hordes would be counterproductive and would eventually succeed only in destroying the source of their wealth. He knew that the "sown" must be fed rather than just fed off. He had wreaked horror and destruction on an unprecedented scale and had achieved legendary status within his own lifetime. As long as he could deliver the riches to quiet his voracious followers, he and his progeny would reign unchallenged.

Chinggis was a man of vision. The blood and destruction, the plunder and the terror had been in the tradition of the age-old conflict between the steppe and the sown. Often apparent adversaries, the steppe and the sown had in fact a symbiotic relationship. Though the steppe seemed to have achieved an overwhelming victory, Chinggis knew that its future depended on the sown. The mean tents of his childhood had been transformed into the lavish pavilions of his kinghood. The ragged camps of old had been replaced by mobile cities of wealth, splendor, and sophistication. The infamy he now enjoyed served as his security.

In fact, the death tolls recorded and the descriptions of the desolation his armies had caused were beyond credibility. The province of Herat, let alone the city, could not have sustained a population of two million, and the logistics involved in actually murdering this number of people within a matter of days are inconceivable. Who would have maintained order as the victims awaited their turn for execution? How would knives and swords been kept sharp and clean for such an arduous task? Where would the mounting piles of bodies and their possessions been stored? Would the executioners have worked shifts and continued through the night? Would food and drink have been served to executioners and victims as the job proceeded? Chroniclers such as Ibn al-Athir, not an eyewitness himself, did much to perpetuate the mythology of the Mongol rule of terror.

> A single one of them [Mongol] would enter a village or quarter wherein were many people, and would continue to slay them one after another, none daring to stretch forth his hand against this horseman. And I have heard that one of them took a man captive, but had not with him any weapon wherewith to kill him; and he said to his prisoner, 'Lay your head on the ground and do not move'; and he did so, and the Tatar went and fetched his sword and slew him therewith.[13]

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and cultivation of Tibetan Buddhism.[14] The new generation of Mongols were essentially settled nomads, living in semipermanent urban camps, educated, sophisticated, and appreciative of life's fineries and luxuries. Qubilai Qa'an has been described as "the greatest cosmopolitan ruler that has ever been known in history."[15] His brother Hülegü and the Ilkhans in Iran received other plaudits for their rule and their justice, far-sightedness, and statesmanship. Both Toluid rulers represented the new face of the Mongols, and it was their economic, cultural, and political alliance that transformed both Iran and China and the lands under their sway.

Once in power, the Mongol princes avowedly sought to rule their subjects with justice and tolerance and for the prosperity of all. They ruled by the standards of the time, and contemporaries differentiate between the rude "barbarian" nomads of the past and their present masters ensconced in their fabulous imperial courts.

The ragged remains of the Khwarazmshah's army, led by the bandit king Jalal al-Din Mingburnu, inspired far more fear and loathing than did the disciplined Mongol troops. Though the Iranian statesman and historian Ata Malik Ala al-Din Juwayni portrayed Jalal al-Din Khwarazmshah as a hero bravely continuing the battle for "Persian independence" against impossible odds, the reality, as Juwayni well knew, was that the adventurer was battling solely for his own survival and his own selfish ends. This iconic Persian hero, "leaping like a stag"[16] across the mountains and deserts of Iran, whose daring won the admiration of Chinggis Khan himself, met his end in the lonely mountains of Kurdistan in 1231, robbed and murdered by bandits who probably never knew who their victim was. Sightings of Jalal al-Din continued to be reported, and his questionable departure endowed him with an almost mystical and mythical status.

The Mongols had never targeted specific groups for persecution on religious, nationalistic, or ethnic grounds. When Baghdad was attacked, it was with the advice of Muslim advisers such as Nasir al-Din Tusi, and many of the supporting armies were led by Muslim rulers fighting under the banner of Islam. Co-option was the desired result of conquest or the threat of attack. Top administrators in all parts of the empire were Mongol, Chinese, Persian, Uyghur, Armenian, European, or Turkish. Loyalty and ability were prized above ethnicity or religion. A center of learning was established around 1260 in Iran's first Mongol capital, Maragheh. It attracted scholars from around the world who flocked, in particular, to see the observatory built for the court favorite, Tusi. The Syriac cleric, historian, philosopher, and writer Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286) used the libraries, stocked from the ruins of Baghdad, Alamut, and other conquered cultural centers, to research his own acclaimed studies and his renowned history. The Nation of Archers had changed its priorities.

But the incorporation of the Iranian heartlands into the Mongol Empire proper was not a one-sided decision. The Persian notables of the various Iranian city-states had not been unaware of events and developments in the east. Westerners were not infrequent visitors to the increasingly opulent and cosmopolitan Mongol court. The accession of Möngke Khan witnessed an acceleration of traffic to Qaraqorum of supplicants eager to assure their place in the new world order. Among those eager

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supplicants was an embassy from Qazvin, a city with strong links with the Mongol elite, that sought more than the usual requests for recognition, allegiance, and aid. The notables of Qazvin, and in particular the Iftikhar family, had long and close ties with the Mongol nobility, including a position as tutor to the young Toluid princes.[17] This embassy from Qazvin, led by their chief qadi and including merchants, wished to capitalize on those links and finally "bring Iran in from the cold" and have their land incorporated fully into the empire, with a royal prince appointed to replace the corrupt and heavy-handed military governor, Baiju Noyan. The elite of Qazvin would have been fully aware of the success and prosperity of fellow Muslims and Persian communities elsewhere in the empire. Persians and Muslims were well represented in the *keshig* (imperial or Praetorian guard). The omnipresent *bitikchi*s (administrative officials) were generally recruited from non-Mongols, and Muslims swelled their ranks.[18]

The likes of Sayyid Ajall Shams al-Din Umar al-Bukhari, long before his elevation to governor of Dali (in modern-day Yunnan, China), would have been an inspiration for those left in the anarchy of the Iranian Plateau. His grandfather, along with his troops, had surrendered to the Mongols after the defeat of the Khwarazmshah, and his son had entered the Mongols' army of bureaucrats. The infant Sayyid Ajall was a "child of the empire" and grew up in the *keshig* before receiving postings around the Mongols' expanding territory. A Muslim, Sayyid Ajall's loyalty was to the state that nurtured him, gave him aspirations, and met those aspirations. He would have identified with the elite of that multiethnic and multicultural state. He was a Muslim and a "Persian" and a member of the ruling elite of the Mongol superstate. He was absorbed into the Mongol polity around 1220, and now the notables of Qazvin saw that their time had come and that with the raising of Möngke Khan, their former young charge, to Great Khan they should act now and seek a reassessment of their status vis-à-vis Qaraqorum. That a conspiracy was afoot when the delegation traveled eastward is made plain by later developments.

Ata Malik Juwayni recognized God's secret intent in unleashing the Mongols onto the Islamic world not only in the annihilation of the Isma'ilis but in the rise of Möngke Khan and the placing of the "keys to the lands of the world" in the "hands of the [Mongols'] power" (*dar dast-i qodrat*).[19] Juwayni, having traveled east himself, was fully aware that Persians and Muslims were among those who exercised the Mongols' power. The "conspiracy" envisaged the appointment of a royal prince who would establish a seat in the West and who could be co-opted and integrated into the political and cultural elite of Iran. That this was the unspoken agenda and long-term plan is made plain by the appearance of Qadi Badawi's "pocket history," the *Niżām al-tavārīkh*, which hardly a decade after Hülegü Khan's establishment of his seat of government in Maragheh was already portraying the Ilkhanate as a legitimate and entrenched Iranian dynasty.[20] The secondary aim of conversion of the Mongol leadership to Islam would not be realized for more than another four decades, but their gradual conversion to Persian culture was evident in the immersion of the Mongol elite grouped

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> O illustrious and magnanimous Qa'an we do not speak of a bridge made of stone, or brick, nor a bridge of chains. I want a bridge of justice over that river, for where there is justice, the world is prosperous. He who comes over the river Amu Darya [Oxus] finds the Qa'an's justice, and on this side of the river there is justice and a path. On that side of the river, the world is evil, and some people become prosperous through injustice.[25]

Hülegü's arrival and welcome in Iran stands in sharp contrast to the arrival of the Mongol envoys thirty years before. For Iran, Hülegü represented the return of a king. Hülegü's establishment of a state in Iran toward the end of the 1250s marked an end to an enduring period of anarchy that had prevailed in the region since the early twelfth century. As he began his leisurely journey westward, he was waylaid by well-wishers and greeted by dignitaries and rulers from throughout the west.

> There came willingly to his service a large number of the princes and generals. People came from every house and from by roads to praise him. At every halting place where they stopped, they received praise from those along the way.[26]

Even the Isma'ili Khurshah sent representatives to earn his goodwill and pledge allegiance. Rulers such as Shams al-Din Kart had already proved their loyalty on the battlefield, and local kings and royals such as those from Cilician Armenia, Kerman, Yazd, Shiraz, and other Iranian, Caucasian, and Anatolian provinces had previously established their allegiance and "devotion" to the Mongols. Hülegü had little to fear from the country he was entering, and the opposition he expected, namely from the Isma'ilis, he was well prepared to greet. Even his later treatment of Khurshah was merciful, and it was not at Hülegü's hand or command that the Nizari Imam met his fate. This was not a man seeking vengeance and destruction. Hülegü Khan came westward to further Mongol overall hegemony over the Islamic lands and to establish his own power base in Iran and Iraq.

The scale and extent of his support on the ground is recorded by a contemporary, Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, writing in 1283. The writer's point is clear. Hulegu Khan operated with the support of the rulers of the whole country. The chronicle states that the Atabeg of Shiraz, the sultans of Rum, the kings of Khorasan, Sistan, Mazanderan, Kerman, Rustamdar, Shirwan, Gorjestan, Iraq, Azerbayjan, Arran, and Luristan and some other representatives all came. Others sent their brothers or relatives and they all sent men, military supplies, provisions, and gifts and placed themselves at his service.[27]

That Hülegü had higher ambitions than the destruction and oppressive subjugation of a sedentary society is made obvious by his treatment of those who fell under his power and judgment. He was aware that he could not blindly trust even his own relatives and that the "locals" had to be cultivated at all levels and in all institutions. The Isma'ili governor of Quhistan, Naser al-Din, whose erudition was widely known, was quickly pardoned and honored despite his associations with the hated Isma'ilis, as was the renowned Khwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, whose denunciation of his former Isma'ili masters was instantly accepted. Nasir al-Din Tusi was almost

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immediately installed in a place of honor and power in Hülegü's court, and yet his only prowess was his remarkable intellectual dexterity and scholarly reputation. In fact, it had been Möngke Khan who had assured Tusi a warm reception. Aware of Tusi's reputation as an astronomer/astrologer, he had requested that his brother entertain the eminent intellectual until such time as it would be convenient to send him eastward. Möngke wanted Tusi to build him an observatory in Qaraqorum, though the Great Khan died before Tusi had even thought of departing. Hülegü did not share his brother's passion for the stars, but he was prepared to indulge his acclaimed guest, since Baghdad's libraries to which Tusi had already laid claim were protected by a generous *waqf* whose implications were already being calculated by Tusi. The Mamluk chronicler, Ibn Aybak al-Safadi (1296–1363), reported the chagrin of the Baghdad ulema, angered at what they saw as the theft not only of their books but of the considerable funds from which the library's upkeep, salaries, and other expenses would be paid. After the fall of Baghdad, one of Tusi's first tasks was the establishment of his seat of learning in Maragheh containing his famous library of 400,000 books and hilltop observatory, a center for an international cast of academics, clerics, and scholars. Bar Hebraeus found sanctuary and peace in that haven of learning, and possibly chose the same site for a new church. Arguably, it is traces of this church that can still be seen today in Maragheh on the western face of a hill overlooking the city only thirty or forty meters beneath the observatory, the Rasad-Khaneh, only the foundations of which remain visible today.

Though destruction and looting were permitted if not encouraged during the assault on Baghdad, the destruction was not as great as has been claimed. In fact, heavy flooding in 1255 and 1256 coupled with the unremitting sectarian strife between the Shi'a and Sunni had already wreaked widespread damage to the city. Many buildings, especially churches and Shi'i mosques and the home of the Shi'i *alim*, Ibn Tavus, were spared, suggesting that the final assault and looting spree was not as unbridled and barbaric as has been claimed. The thinker and Shi'i divine, Ibn Tavus, together with other clergy and scholars were all spared the massacres of Baghdad, and like the Caucasus's leading Christian clerics and academics were soon co-opted into Hülegü's circle of apparent admirers. This was not the sparing of possible magic makers or spiritual interlocutors by the superstitious, the ignorant, and the naive, but the deliberate policy of a ruler with aspirations beyond his origins, a conclusion alluded to in Rashid al-Din's closing pages on Hülegü Khan. Though the vizier makes some disparaging remarks about Hülegü's trust and belief in the deceits and trickery of the alchemists on whom the Ilkhan squandered his resources, Rashid al-Din readily acknowledges Hülegü's keen interest in science and the disputations and discussions of philosophers and scholars and his generous allocation of pensions and stipends to these learned "hangers-on."

If in these early years of Mongol rule the countries and provinces enjoying Ilkhanid rule generally prospered and experienced a long-absent period of relative peace and security, the resurgence of patronage, the regeneration of an enriched spirituality, and the establishment of a cultural identity that has persisted until the present day were all fruits garnered as a result of that development. The period of

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alien terror that had so troubled the world in the second decade of the century. If Chinggis Khan had been the punishment of God, his grandson Hülegü was "God's secret intent revealed."[28]

The opening years of the Ilkhanid state saw, then, a widespread cultural blossoming of a knot of trends that had been slowly emerging from the early thirteenth century. The reasons for this renaissance are many, but it was the relative stability, the economic revival through trade, and a sudden reawakened confidence that surfaced after it became clear that the masters in Maragheh were there to stay, and it was this that provided the basis on which that trend would grow. The anarchy and disruption that grew and intensified after the irruption of the Mongols in the first quarter of the thirteenth century added to the already growing numbers of refugees heading westward. The Sultanate of Rum in Anatolia offered an early haven where the influx of poets, Sufis, and *qalandar*s, along with merchants, exiled notables, and refugees, was welcomed, and many of these diverse people were soon assimilated into the multiethnic, pluralistic, and religiously and culturally tolerant sultanate. The Saljuq sultanate in Rum stood in contrast to the chaotic and anarchic lands to the east.

After Hülegü's triumphant march across northern Iran to establish his capital in Maragheh in the 1250s, this situation changed. It was awareness of the change that Hülegü's advent promised that prompted Sa'di's return to his beloved Shiraz, as the poet himself informs his readers in the preface to his *Gulistan*. The remnants of the Khwarazmians had fled into Syria, the Isma'ilis had been conquered and dispersed, the caliphate had been neutralized, the Persian ministates, such as Kerman, Shiraz, and Yazd, had pledged allegiance to the new king, and once again the roads of Iran were made safe for business and travel. Quite suddenly, Azerbaijan became the western hub of a vast land empire and Tabriz the emporium of a transcontinental trading network. For those first two decades, the new Ilkhanid state was able to enjoy the fruits of strong central government, relative internal political stability, and unfettered trade and cultural links.

The demise of the caliphate freed a blossoming spirituality from previous constraints, and the new effectively secular authorities did not interfere with these emancipated schools. Sunni Islam was able to cast aside the chains of its Arab roots and assume its more global Turco-Persian identity. The bureaucrats of the Ilkhanid *diwan* were Persians who had grown up in Mongol *ordu*s, and their early companions and childhood friends had been Mongols as well as Turks, Armenians, Persians, Uyghurs, and Khwarazmians. They were a new generation, just as their Mongol overlords were a new generation at least one step removed from the harsh austerity and brutality of the steppe. If the unity and stability of the new regime began to unravel after Abaqa's death and the political rivalries between princes and bureaucratic clans began to destroy what order and discipline Hülegü and his son had succeeded in implementing, this should not detract from the accomplishments of the new order or obscure the aims and aspirations on which the new order was based. If there was a return to partial anarchy and confusion in the last two decades of the thirteenth century, it should not be

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forgotten that first three decades of the fourteenth century were to become a golden age for some.[29]

It has long been assumed that it was the reign of Ghazan Khan (r. 1295–1304) and his remarkable prime minister Rashid al-Din Hamadani (d. 1318) that marked the transformation of the Ilkhanate from a "barbarian" nomadic state into a comparatively stable "civilized" society. This traditional analysis is not only simplistic and clichéd, it is manifestly wrong. Ghazan Khan was responsible for making Islam the official religion of the state, and he became a Muslim himself. His chief minister, Rashid al-Din, was also responsible for a number of wide-ranging and sweeping reforms in response to the political and economic chaos of the previous two decades. However, such changes, important though they undoubtedly were, cannot negate the achievements and popular rule of the first two Ilkhans, Hülegü and his son Abaqa (d. 1282). It was they who laid the foundations of the state that was to flourish until 1335 and whose legacy is still evident today.

Since the principal source for information on the reign of the "reforming" Ilkhan, Ghazan Khan, is his chief minister, the prolific Rashid al-Din, whose remarkable *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh* ("Collection of Histories") describes not only the reforms themselves but the background behind their implementation, the question of bias, political maneuvering, and self-interest must be considered crucial to any interpretations, conclusions, and claims made by this powerful minister. The lengthy chapters detailing Ghazan's years in power and his administrative reforms, in which this minister played such a critical role, form the core of Rashid al-Din's voluminous work, and that his personal stamp is indelibly marked upon these pivotal pages is indisputable. His assessment of the Mongols' legacy with which his master, the *Padeshah-i Islam*, was faced with dealing is damning, though its vehemence is reminiscent of the polemic of the politician.

> When provinces and great cities were being subjugated [The Mongols] killed so many people throughout the length and breadth of the provinces that few were left, like Balkh, Shuburqan, Taliqan, Marv, Sarakhs, Herat, Turkestan, Ray, Hamadan, Qum, Isfahan, Maragheh, Ardabil, Bardaʿa, Ganjah, Baghdad, Irbil, and most provinces attached to these cities.[30]

This was known to be a blatant exaggeration of the reality of the invasions, only the first of which was predominantly destructive in nature. Such passages suggest that their writer was intent on the creation of an image for his patron through the use of rhetoric and that his presentation of the "facts" had an ulterior motive beyond his usual faithful recording of history.

That the Ilkhan Ghazan was a remarkable man and an exceptional ruler is widely averred, and his commitment to reform is not disputed. He was a patron of the arts and sciences, he was a linguist, he was according to Rashid al-Din and others an accomplished artisan of various crafts, and his keen interest in the traditions and legacy of his ancestors was undimmed by his enthusiastic adoption of Islam. It was his passion for knowledge of the past and the present that led him to commission his chief minister to embark on the remarkable compilation of histories, the

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Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh, the first part of which ensured that the Mongols and their legacy and role in the history of the world would far outlive their corporeal presence. If he was physically rather unprepossessing and off-putting, this was amply compensated by his other well-attested gifts, succinctly expressed by the Armenian historian Hetoum:

> And marvellous it was that so little a body might have so great virtue; for among a thousand men could not be so slender a man, nor so evil made, nor a fouler man. He surmounted all others in prowess and virtue.[31]

Ghazan's stature and special position in history as the ruler who restored the rule of the true faith to the Islamic world has embellished all contemporary and subsequent accounts of his reign and must be considered as an important factor when assessing the extent and effectiveness of his reforms and the contrasts drawn between his years in power and those of his pagan predecessors.

That there was a need for dramatic reform is indisputable, but as Wassaf, a contemporary historian and state accountant, pointed out, the dire economic situation in the country was due in no small degree to the chronic instability that had predominated immediately prior to Ghazan's succession and had emptied the treasuries:

> no money remained in the treasury because in that year (1295) in the course of eight months three rulers had succeeded to the throne and twice in the far corners of the empire there had been large military expeditions, inevitably demands for payments in advance and extraordinary levies were made and *mavashi* had been taken at the rate of 20% in most of the tax districts, especially in Fars.[32]

The reigns of Ahmad, Arghun, Gaykhatu, and Baydu between 1284 and 1295 saw the country lapse again into relative instability after the euphoria of Hülegü and his son Abaqa, who had brought both prosperity and security after so many years of chaos. There was the struggle for the throne, the scandalous depravity of Gaykhatu Khan, and the economic madness accompanying the introduction of paper currency, the *chao*, in imitation of the successful system operating in Yuan China. There was the horror of the outbreak of anti-Jewish riots and pogroms following the fall of the very competent Jewish vizier Saʿd al-Dawla and his replacement by Sadr al-Din Zanjani, whose imposition of the *chao* paved the way for Ghazan Khan, who had refused to force it on the people of Khorasan, where he was governor. Rashid al-Din, an adept political maneuverer, maximized the propaganda potential of the economic chaos prevailing in the country when Ghazan succeeded.

There was a battle for ascendancy between the traditional "uncooked" Mongol lords, whose contempt for their subjects accounted for their remorseless demands for crippling taxes and ultimately self-defeating ill-treatment of these same sedentary "dust-scratchers," and the reformers around Ghazan, who saw the lands of Persia as their future and perceived their own prosperity as intimately coupled with that of their settled subjects. Ghazan tried to convince his fellow Mongols that their practice of continual merciless exploitation of the peasantry was self-destructive,

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since those same peasants provided the sustenance without which the Mongol hordes could no longer survive. In an oft-quoted speech that may or may not reproduce Ghazan's actual words, this reasoning is spelled out and provides the rationale behind Ghazan's reforms.

> "I am not partial to the Tajiks. If it were in my interests to pillage them all, no one would be more able to do it than I, and we would pillage together; but if henceforth you ex- pect to requisition supplies and meals, I will reprimand you severely. Just think–if you use violence on the peasants and take their cattle and grain or let your horses graze in their fields, what you will do next? When you beat or hurt their wives and children, just think how dear our own wives and children are to us. Their children are just like that to them; they too are human beings like us.[33]

His closing remarks would doubtless have caused considerable unease, since they implied a rejection of the traditional belief in the nomad's inherent superiority to the people of the sown and were reflective of his adoption of Islam, the religion of the subject people.

How heartfelt his conversion to Islam was will always raise questions, since the wars with his fellow Muslims to the south, the Mamluks, continued unabated, as did his search for an alliance against the Egyptians with the Christian powers of the West and Anatolia. However, Ghazan saw himself as the legitimate leader of the Islamic world, and for him the Mamluks, as the sons of slaves without royal blood, were beneath contempt and certainly not worthy of being treated either as equals or as rivals.

His much-vaunted suppression of the Buddhists and Christians has been overstated, and in many cases it was certainly not instigated by him. In addition, many of the attacks on Christians and other non-Muslims were either the work of opportunists or were simply acts of violence interpreted in retrospect with the brush of religion. His appropriation of the trappings of Islam would have been necessary to capture the unquestioning loyalty and support of the majority population in order to carry out his reforms against the wishes of much of the Mongol old guard.

If Ghazan wished to cement over the divide between conquerors and conquered and end the estrangement existing between Mongol and Persian, conversion to Islam was a prerequisite. However, it is also true that increasing numbers of Mongols were converting to Islam, influenced no doubt by the large number of Turks in their ranks who had already converted. Since many of his harsher strictures against non-Muslims and un-Islamic practices were relaxed later in his reign, the sincerity of his Islamic fervor, adopted at the same time as he was making his play for the throne against the pagan rival Baydu, might have been in part tactical. The Islam that the Mongols embraced was not the austere faith of the Sunni clerics but more the folk Islam beloved of the Turkomans, which allowed the reverence and rise of such Sufi masters as Shaykh Safi al-Din of Ardabil (d. 1334). These charismatic Sufi masters would have bridged the gap between the rabbinical gravity of the traditionalist mullahs and the shamans of the steppe. The titles Ghazan adopted established him

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as both a champion of Islam and a successor to the crown of the Iranian kings: "His Majesty the Padishah of Islam, the Sovereign of the Seven Climates of the World," "His Majesty the Refuge of Caliphate the Great Khosrow of Iran the Successor of the Realm of the Kayanids."[34] His adopted titles sought to forge a link with an ancient heritage and provide spiritual vindication. His reforms would be final proof of the advent of a new age and the birth of a dynasty of Mongol Iranians.

The reforms that Ghazan proposed were far-reaching and comprehensive. Taxation in general was to be regulated and the frequency and method of collection formalized. Landholdings and villages were to be registered and their taxability officially assessed. Disputes over landownership would be settled, and lapses of over thirty years would invalidate claims. The once-lauded *yam* (postal/relay) system was to be overhauled in an effort to end the widespread abuse of this courier service, and the activities and privileges of the *ilchi*s (official envoys) would be severely curbed. The status, powers, and financing of qadis (Islamic judges) were to be formalized. In the bazaar, weights and measures would be standardized and the coinage reformed. To repair some of the damage caused by the years of economic disruption and population dispersal, incentives were to be proposed in order to attract cultivators back to land that had fallen permanently fallow or had been abandoned. To encourage population growth, it was proposed that the size of dowries be restricted, thus facilitating divorce and the ending of unproductive marriages. The vexing problem of the army was also to be confronted, and the traditional Saljuqid practice of the *iqta* (taxation rights to specific land) was to be reintroduced to pay a soldiery many of whom had been dangerously deprived of their established form of remuneration, namely plunder. Perhaps most significantly, Ghazan proposed ending the practice of issuing drafts on land and produce, with capital retribution for infractions. Taxes would henceforth be collected by centrally appointed officials in cash, not kind.

Rashid al-Din's unique histories not only provide the details of all these proposals for reform but contain copies of the actual *yarligh*s (edicts) themselves. However, what all this proves is that Ghazan and his ministers were acutely aware of the sorry state that their lands were in and that the need for reform was crucial. It is doubtful that much could have been achieved in the few years that Ghazan was actually secure upon the throne before his untimely early death at the age of thirty-two, though he undoubtedly set in motion a trend away from the overly predatory practices of earlier years. By establishing a symbiotic relationship between the army and the land through the issuance of *iqta*s, Ghazan hoped to reduce the drain on the treasury and remove the soldiers' excuse for pilfering the peasantry to compensate for their lack of supplies. However, once the pressure was relaxed, old habits would invariably resurface, and vigilance would have to be constant to avoid the excesses of the past.

Mustawfi Qazvini, as a *mustawfi* or audit official in the financial administration of the latter Ilkhanate, had credible access to figures pertaining to the state's income. He states that revenue rose from 17 million dinars at the start of Ghazan's reign to 21 million at the close, an increase of about 23 percent over the nine years. Such a figure

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such views taken in hindsight and from a period of great political instability and economic chaos must be judged accordingly.

If it was Ghazan Khan who drew the battle lines between the old guard and the emerging Mongol Iranians and Persian "Mongols," there is little to indicate that victory went immediately to either side. Whereas to the north, in the lands dominated by the Golden Horde, there were signs, such as Turkish-inscribed coins, that the Mongolian language had been superseded by Turkish as early as 1280, in the lands of Persia and Azerbaijan manuscripts and coins continued to be issued in Mongolian script at least to the end of the fourteenth century. The subjects of the Golden Horde were in the main Turks and fellow steppe nomads, whereas a far greater cultural divide existed between the sedentary and urbanized Persians of the Ilkhanate and their Mongol rulers. Resistance to Ghazan's reforms would have been all the stronger because they could have been seen as an assault on the very fundaments of the Mongol nomadic state and the Yasas of the Great Khan, Chinggis. Whether the program for reform was as serious and widespread as Rashid al-Din's writing suggests is doubtful. Islamic Persia was a far greater threat to the Mongol identity and the continuity of their traditions than was the culture of the Qipchaq Turks of the Golden Horde.

The greatest source for our knowledge pertaining to the reforms of Ghazan Khan is the pages of the *Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh,* whose author was the architect of those same reforms. The history details the legislation and justification for their implementation. That Rashid al-Din felt the need for the creation of such an impressive manifesto suggests that he expected very great resistance to his recommendations. The fact that no major schism actually developed, that Ghazan died of natural causes and was succeeded relatively peacefully by his brother, and that no true polarization had become manifest even on the death of Abu Saʿid in 1335 suggests that for all the rhetoric and posturing, no real attempt was made during Ghazan's lifetime or later to forcibly carry out these radical proposals. On an individual level, certain towns, villages, or regions may have seen improvements in the lot of the peasants and town dwellers. As has been mentioned, Ghazan is known for his building work, particularly in Tabriz, and his brother, Öljeitü, is assured a worthy place in history for his construction of a new capital, the city of Sultaniya, with his remarkable tomb that has survived to the present time. Ghazan Khan's attempts to reform the psyche of his army to give them a stake in the agricultural economy by the issuance of *iqta*s occurred late in his reign and would not have had time to have any dramatic effect. His minister claimed that the measures were popular and that the "eyes and hearts" of the new military owners were well satisfied, that they were desirous of taking up the practice of farming and owning their own estates. However, for many of the Mongol troops husbandry could never be a complete substitute for the more lucrative and enjoyable pastime of marauding, and despite the overwhelming victories of 1300, Ghazan Khan never substantiated his conquest of Syria, and the province continued to function as a sporting ground for his soldiery, hungering for blood and loot. That a program of radical reform was conceived and that there was some degree of implementation is attested to in various sources, but it is only

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the reforms' architect, Rashid al-Din, who has dwelled to any great extent on their importance. If there was an economic upswing during Ghazan's reign, and to a lesser extent in the reigns of his successors, this would have been due to no small degree to strong and comparatively stable leadership. Ghazan's conversion to Islam would have been generally popular and would have led to an increase in cooperation from the subject people. How popular his *yarligh*s further tying the peasants to the land were with the *ra'iyyat* (people) is difficult to judge, since the decree merely formalized a practice that had been a reality before. The lot of the peasantry has always been chronically miserable, and it is unlikely that their fortunes changed to any great degree even if their overlords did.

Ghazan Khan owed his reputation as the reforming Ilkhan to the pages of his court historian and self-propagandist Rashid al-Din, a prolific writer with overriding political, terrestrial, and financial ambitions. Without the heralding of the proposed reforms by his minister, Ghazan Khan would have been better known for his conversion to Islam and the comparative stability and resultant modest prosperity of his reign. The real importance of his conversion to Islam, far surpassing any supposed economic or social reforms, was the narrowing of the cultural chasm between the occupiers and the occupied. By declaring himself the *Padeshah-i Islam* and adopting the title of the ancient kings of Persia, Ghazan was committing himself to his adopted country and its people and pledging them to a common future and shared destiny. It has been suggested that the reason he commissioned Rashid al-Din to write his history of the Mongols is that he realized that the future would see the Mongols' ascendancy dissolved in the destiny of the majority and that he wished to assure their memory a worthy place in the annals of the future. His reforms were a vision probably formulated by his chief minister, but one that had little opportunity or real hope of ever becoming a reality.

The Ilkhans did not decline and fade away into degeneracy and decadence, nor did they suffer military defeat or internal rebellion. They simply disappeared at the height of their power and prestige when Abu Sa'id died and left no heirs to take his throne. In the ensuing scramble for power, the Ilkhanate empire split into various warring factions that within two generations were swept away by the destructive forces of Timur (Tamerlane, d. 1405).

During Abu Sa'id's reign, the confrontation between the old guard of Mongol amirs who still hankered after the traditions of the steppe and the reformers who had integrated fully with their adopted country came to a head, and a showdown between Abu Sa'id's chief minister, the Mongol *noyan* Chopan, who was effectively the ruler of the country, and the rebellious lords resulted in the strengthening of the young king's position. He forced a confrontation with Chopan, regarded by Abu Sa'id and other notables as far too powerful. Abu Sa'id had alienated the devout Muslim Chopan by insisting on the hand of his daughter, Baghdad Khatun, who unfortunately was already married to the aptly named Hasan-i Bozorg ("Big Hasan"). Abu Sa'id invoked the Mongol *yasa* that gave the ruler the right to claim the hand of any woman he wished, regardless of her marital status. He further antagonized his chief minister by arresting and then executing his eldest son, and

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that still stands today in the center of Beijing. Qubilai commissioned Ikhtiyar al-Din, another Muslim from the western Islamic lands, to assist in the design of his new capital, Dadu (Khanbaliq/Beijing). Astronomy, astrology, medicine, mapmaking, printing, agronomy, agriculture, historiography, cuisine, and geography were all branches of learning actively encouraged and pursued by the Mongol courts. Persian communities were dominant in some important Chinese cities, especially the eastern ports such as Hangzhou, Zayton (Quanzhou), and Guangzhou. Rashid al-Din records that Baha al-Din Qunduzi was governor of Zayton while Shihab al-Din Qunduzi was the *chingsang* (government representative) of Hangzhou. The full extent of this intimate relationship between Mongol China and Iran is only recently being rediscovered, and it heralds a major new direction for future research.

In Hangzhou, the mosque, rebuilt in 1281 by the Persian Ala al-Din, stands to this day, and the tombstones secured in the mosque's outhouse attest to the Persian community's illustrious past. Discovered around 1920, during excavations to build the road that now encircles Hangzhou's famous West Lake, a great number of tombstones still lay buried on the site of the old royal Jujing Gardens. The lakeside royal gardens of the Song emperors adorning the shore and hills outside the Qingbo Gate had fallen into disrepair, and then sometime after 1276, when the city fell to the Mongol armies, and before 1291, when they are mentioned by the chronicler Zhou Mi, the gardens were given over to the Muslim community to serve as a cemetery, this in itself indicative of the prestige in which the mainly Persian Muslim community was held at that time. Only twenty-one or so tombstones remain today, almost all held in the Phoenix Mosque, and their inscriptions attest to the status of the Persian community in the city under the Yuan when Hangzhou, though no longer the capital, retained its power and influence, particularly as a cultural center. Military figures such as the Amir Badr al-Din and the Amir Bakhtiar, important officials like Khwaja Mohammad bin Arslan al-Khanbaliqi, religious *alim*s such as Taj al-Din Yahya ibn Burhan al-Din, and merchant *khwajas* such as "the pride of the merchants, famous in the cities, patron of the learned," Shams al-Din al-Isfahani and "pride of the merchants ... famous in the cities ... familiar among the princes of the regions of the coasts" Mahmud ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Simnani are just some of those whose tombstones, recording their deaths in the early fourteenth century, are only now being closely examined. Most of these figures are honored as martyrs, a term signifying that they died far from home. Hangzhou, or Khansa'i as it was known in Persian, received oceangoing vessels, often in collaboration with the nearby port city of Ningbo, but was also a river port connected to the canal and river network of inland China. Many of its Persian citizens, like the mosque's benefactor, Ala al-Din, would have arrived overland rather than by sea or, like another famous inhabitant of the Jujing cemetery, Sharaf al-Din (1256–1323), migrated to Hangzhou through promotion, having entered Chinggisid service through his father, one of those artisans moved from the "Western Regions" early in the Mongol conquests. Though written in Persian, the calligraphy was already showing early traces of what would become a very distinctive style, and the floral border designs were reflective of the blue and white glaze porcelain for which the Yuan period

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CHAPTER 11

TIMURIDS AND TURCOMANS

TRANSITION AND FLOWERING IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

ALI ANOOSHAHR

THE winter of 1405 was a desperately cold one. The layer of ice on the River Oxus (now the Amu Darya in Uzbekistan) was so thick that even after digging over four feet down the scouts still did not reach water. A massive army of warriors crossed over, led by their seventy-year-old commander and king, Timur (Tamerlane), who had conquered or plundered all the lands between India and the Balkans and who had also set off the greatest artistic flowering in Western Asia to date. He was beginning a jihad against China. On Wednesday night, the eleventh of February, Timur drank excessively at a night gathering and ended up with a fever. He died the following Wednesday, February 18, 1405. For the next hundred years, his empire disintegrated into smaller units held and fought over by his sons and descendants, none of whom could dominate the others. This was an all-too-common pattern that had characterized politics in the region for the past five hundred years.

Almost a century after Timur's death, a twelve-year-old boy by the name of Isma'il rode out of Ardabil (in today's northwestern Iran) and began his rapid capture of the lands between the Tigris and Afghanistan. His family, the Safavids, had been the leaders of a religious shrine who had gradually entered politics and championed Twelver Shi'ism. Apparently, some of Isma'il's core followers believed him to an apocalyptic figure. They reportedly did not wear armor in battle because they thought his charisma protected them. They won an astonishing series of victories

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> Ulugh Beg sent a trustworthy messenger to Mirza 'Abdullatif [her grandson who was in the camp] saying, 'The Lord of people and countries has died. Our people do not have a leader anymore. It would be best if you look after those who are present and make sure general panic does not take hold of the victorious camp." Mirza 'Abdullatif consented. The next day cries of mourning spread throughout the camp. Then Mirza Babur along with a squadron of braves who were his personal retainers set off for Khurasan. Mirza Khalil Sultan also headed out that way and joined forces with Mirza Babur's forces. Once their soldiers reached the camp market they began plundering and suddenly chaos broke out on the scene. The cry of the shopkeepers reached Mirza 'Abdullatif who got on his horse and rode around the camp, punishing a few with his sword and subduing the melee. He spent two or three days trying to control the situation, and thereafter sent a messenger to his father [Ulugh Beg, Timur's grandson] in Samarqand. On the same day he had Timur's corpse placed on a litter on a camel's back and headed out for Khurasan. Along the way however, a few wicked fools told the prince that queen Gawharshad had colluded with the Tarkhani commanders and that she was planning to pull off some kind of a ruse. The prince who certainly exhibited the symptoms of stone cold insanity and also knew the extent of his grandmother's love for prince 'Alauddawlah, believed those fools. He ordered his soldiers to loot the baggage of the queen and the Tarkhanis and had all the people whom he distrusted to be put in chains.[1]

The disorientation and uncertainty of the Timurid princes are quite clear in this passage. The events of the next several decades certainly exhibited the same pattern of infighting and disorder. Likewise, just as with the periods before, the political instability that followed Timur's death led to the rise of another strong military ruler who united (by conquest) the various political entities and formed an empire of his own. In this case, the new victor was Jahan Shah, ruler of the Qara Qoyunlu ("black sheep") Turcoman confederation (originating in western Iran and eastern Anatolia). A poet and warrior, initially a governor in Azerbaijan appointed by Timur's son Shah Rukh, Jahan Shah spent the two decades following his master's death (1447–67) constructing his own vast kingdom, conquering even the Timurid heartlands of Afghanistan and Central Asia. He fell, however, to a man named Uzun Hasan, leader of another Turcoman confederation, the Aq Qoyunlu ("white sheep"). Predictably, the Qara Qoyunlu polity quickly imploded following the defeat of their leader in a rout as incredible as their rapid ascendance to power. Finally, as the Aq Qoyunlu kingdom too devolved into internal strife after Uzun Hasan's death, another new contender, this time Isma'il the Safavid, took advantage of the power vacuum, defeated his Timurid and Turcoman competitors, and set up a new kingdom. Isma'il differed from his predecessors in one major way: he came not from a nomadic or military background but a religious one. Moreover, he took pains to institute a comprehensive and exclusive identity for his empire that was not personal, by establishing Shi'ism as the state religion. This explains in part why his realm did not disintegrate following his death. His subjects had an alternative source of identity and loyalty that was far greater than the leader himself.

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Society in the Fifteenth Century

To understand the reasons for this radical divergence in politics, we must take into account a number of socioeconomic and religious factors that characterized events during the fifteenth century. How was society organized during this period? Since several centuries before, at the head of the social pyramid in Western Asia, following the ruler, had stood autonomous amirs (commanders/rulers) living on military land grants (called *iqta*, or later *suyurghal*) bestowed on them by their general/king (such as Timur or Jahan Shah) in exchange for military service in time of need. In Timur's case, the amir was also expected to help rebuild what the conquering army had just destroyed. The amirs were garrisoned in large towns, but their income (since they did not receive salaries) was to be earned by taxing the local economy, which was primarily agrarian. The money was considered the personal property of the amir to distribute as pay to his subordinates. Before the fifteenth century, the land grants were not hereditary. The local ruler would have little chance to establish long-term ties to a region under his rule, and would therefore try to collect as much money as possible in the short time granted to him. When the amir came from a nomadic background, the financial exploitation would be coupled with the ruin of the infrastructures of agriculture (such as irrigation channels), either because of ignorance or because the amir preferred farmlands to revert to pasture so that his horses could move freely and graze.

The unavoidable monetary exploitation of this system would of course take a heavy toll on the peasants, who had to bear the bulk of this financial burden. The peasants would naturally try to resist this system. They might hide their income or occasionally fight the tax collectors, though the latter option would often result in merciless reprisals. Sometimes the peasants would escape, joining pastoralist groups. Otherwise they could try to join the army. Finally, a desperate farmer could join a robber band and engage in banditry. All in all, the land-grant system gradually led to a waste of human as well as agricultural resources in the long run.

However, by the fifteenth century (especially toward its end) two major changes took place. The first was that the land grants became hereditary, and the second was that the number of these grants increased exponentially as a result of political instability (the rulers whose treasury would be depleted due to rapid succession and war would need to curry favor with local notables). More research must be done on the effects of these developments, but it is quite possible that such changes reduced the purely exploitative relationship between landlord and peasant and led to a great deal more socioeconomic stability overall.

Certain long-term patterns in the life of townspeople are also important to consider. Earlier, military commanders did not consider urban areas to be their main source of income. The role of the amir would have been more as protector of the town. The town's elite was in an interdependent relationship with the local commander. For instance, the amir would patronize the arts and support the ulema (Muslim scholars and jurists). At times, such men served as spokespeople of the

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townspeople and their interests, but they still were financially dependant on the amirs for their livelihood, a fact not lost to people from lower social strata.

People belonging to the middling ranks of the society (such as craftsmen, shopkeepers, and artisans) could remedy this situation by organizing themselves according to their craft (guilds) as well as by neighborhood. Each neighborhood would have its own gates that could be closed at night for protection (from thieves or sectarian attacks). Each town would also have its own militia clubs. These were groups of men who would often organize to represent "lower-class" interests. These clubs could be engaged in sports such as wrestling, have common eating areas, and possess specific codes of conduct demanding honor and chivalry from the members. They could help defend a city in times of invasion, but they might also serve to protect their members from the soldiers of the garrisons that had been stationed locally. One or more of these organizations would often be closely associated with lodges belonging to popular religious leaders. Beginning in the eleventh century, popular religiosity in the Middle East had been centered on Muslim mystics and ascetics (Sufis) who congregated in secret or open orders. By the fifteenth century, the leader of these orders, the Sufi shaykh, began to function as the spokesperson of the townspeople in the face of government exploitation, particularly as the ulema became known as the representatives (or at least associates) of the ruling elite. Moreover, since at least the Mongol period Sufism had been focused on reverence for holy men, and had developed disciplines for the attainment of divine rapture. For the quick attainment of spiritual ecstasy, drug use had become prevalent. At the same time, the relative prosperity of the Timurid reign for cities and rural areas, especially in the first half of the fifteenth century, as well as of the nomads in marginal areas (a reversal of the trends of the Mongol period), led to strengthening of urban militias and protest movements. All the while, many common people seemed to believe that the Islam of the religious elite had failed to create egalitarian social justice. Under the shadow of Sufism, which allowed for expressions of opposition to privilege as well as to convention (recklessness toward social norms in search of personal emancipation), there arose a number of anti-elite and millenarian movements—a fact accelerated no doubt in the 1400s as the tenth century of the Islamic calendar (and hence the Muslim millennium) neared. In addition to all this, the close association of Sufi brotherhoods with the interests of the urban commoners had a fundamental economic element to it as well.

Religion and Economy

Most people living in the region during the fifteenth century were indeed Muslims, but this should not give the impression of a monotonous uniformity of belief and practice. In fact, the religious life of the period was highly divergent and even paradoxical. Timur himself provides a perfect example of this phenomenon. On

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the one hand he sponsored the ulema, built mosques, and fought wars in the name of Islam with utmost zealousness. On the other hand, the Central Asian conqueror directed most of his aggression toward Muslim, committing massacres in Isfahan, Delhi, and Syria. Destruction and pillaging of cities at the hands of Timur's soldiers often extended to mosques and Muslim schools as well. An account of the sack of the city of Delhi in India exemplifies this apparent contradiction. The text is by a Timurid historian who based his narrative on the reports of someone who took part in the events. The first passage describes the killing of non-Muslim captives in the name of holy war, a perverse application of the term to a practical yet brutal instance of preventive bloodshed.

> On this day, the princes and the commanders told his majesty [Timur] that over a hundred thousand Indians including *kafirs* ("infidels"), pagans, and idol-worshippers had been captured since when the army had crossed the Indus River. They feared lest these captives might decide to join the pagans of Delhi on the day of war and rush to their side. So the World Conqueror issued an order for the execution of all the Indians who had been captured, and a bloody flood was unleashed. Even [the author] who in matters of virtue and bravery possessed various signs and evidence, though he had never before even slaughtered a sheep, took note of the command and killed with the sword of holy war ten Indians whom he held in his tent.[2]

It is clear from this report that the reason for the execution of the prisoners lay in the fear of the Timurid army's inability to control them in face of attack. However, the slaughter is given a religious justification. The religious rhetoric may have been cynical exploitation, or Timur may have believed that this was precisely how a champion of the faith should behave. When the sack of Delhi is described (and many of the inhabitants there were Muslims), even the author of the narrative had a difficult time making excuses for the behavior of his army. The episode occurs after the submission of the city and the promise of the inhabitants to pay ransom in exchange for avoiding violence.

> On Thursday a squadron of the soldiers had assembled at the gates of Delhi, and they were attacking and harassing the local people as hungry wolves go after sheep and as murderous eagles prey on weak birds. Therefore Timur issued an order to the commanders to go and chasten those soldiers. Meanwhile some of the lords came to Delhi for sightseeing, and other commanders were stationed at the gate collecting the amnesty money. A few thousand men too who had documents for sugar and grain arrived at the city as well. At the same time, another order had been issued demanding from the commanders the arrest of the country folk who had turned rebellious and escaped to the city. Before we knew it, a massive number of men and soldiers had poured into the city. His Majesty was at a feast and no one dared inform him of the matter. The commanders tried to put down that disorder by the sword, but nothing availed. The tide of disorder had risen so high that it could not be controlled, and the rush of the army had reached such an extent that it could not be stopped. When God Most High wills the harming and destruction of a people, all the causes will coincide and nothing can stop it. *And if God wills misfortune for a people, there is none that can repel it, nor have they a defender beside Him* [Quran 13:11; translation by Pickthall, slightly

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> modified]. Thereby in the boroughs of Delhi such as Sari, Jahanpanah, and Old Delhi, Indian pagans began fighting back, and many of them set fire to their own houses and property, immolating themselves along with their women and children. Within an hour the soldiers broke down the doors to the inhabitants' houses and began plundering. Yet no one dared to inform Timur about all this for he was drowned in feasting and carousing. Yet in fear of him, the commanders locked down all the city gates so that the army stationed outside would not be able to come in. The fifteen thousand soldiers who were inside the fortifications kept plundering as night fell and set fire to the houses. In some neighborhoods the pagans would fight back. When the next day dawned the unruliness of the soldiers reached a climax and there was no way of stopping them ... On Sunday they went to Old Delhi where most of the Indians had escaped and gathered at the cathedral mosque [*masjid-i j mi'*] where they were fighting. Prince Shah Malak Bahadur and Ali Sultan Tuvachi went there with five hundred skilled men and dispatched the souls of the enemies of religion and government to hell. They raised a tower from the decapitated heads of the Indians and left the bodies as food for beasts and birds.[3]

The author's discomfort in describing this scene is clear enough. He simply cannot hide or justify the violence of the soldiers who were left to maraud in the city. Timur is exonerated from direct responsibility, but his negligence due to drunkenness is obvious. Perhaps to whitewash the matter, he claims that most of the victims were pagans, and yet it is obvious that the violence against the inhabitants was general, and the disorderly soldiers certainly make no attempt to separate Muslims from non-Muslims. Finally, in a twisted reversal of the event, the slaughter that takes place in the mosque is justified as a defense of Islam!

In sum, Timur seems to have thought that the moral teachings of Islam did not apply to him. His personal sense of religion rather reflects popular Islam: respect for Sufis and belief in miracles, magic, and folk precautions. Thus Timur's religion was quite typical of his time. It is possible that he cynically manipulated the Muslim faith for political gain, but it is also quite likely that as an illiterate pastoralist soldier from a marginal territory, he and his commanders genuinely believed their practice to be correct Islam.

However, while Timur personally seems to have preferred the company of Sufis, as a patron he coupled his destruction of Muslim towns with patronage for Muslim religious elites as well. Many scholars and theologians received financial backing from the Timurids throughout the fifteenth century. What is particularly significant about the patronage of high Islam by the courts of Timur and his descendants is that royal generosity extended equally to both Sunni and Shi'i ulema. The reason for this apparent fairness lies in developments going back to the Mongol invasion. Whereas from the eleventh to the thirteenth century Sunni Islam had enjoyed official sponsorship, with the coming of the Mongols a new form of patronage was introduced in Western Asia. The Mongols did not show particular preference for any of the various religious communities in their empire and rewarded loyalty from any cooperative group. Suddenly Twelver Shi'ites as well as Buddhists, Jews, and Christians had access to government opportunities that had previously been reserved for Sunni Muslims. The collapse of Mongol rule in the early fourteenth century did not undermine the

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The Sufi Order in Ardabil

The history of the Safavids will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter. However, the origin of the movement was very much a product of the events of the Timurid and Turcoman periods. The founder of the order, Shaykh Safi al-Din, was a Sufi master who lived in the city of Ardabil in northwestern Iran during the Mongol rule. He seems to have been a highly respected figure among both the common town dwellers and Mongol officials. Hamd Allah Qazvini, a Persian historian in Mongol service, wrote in 1329, "Shaykh Safi al-Din of Ardabil is a living contemporary. He is a blessed man and his prayers are answered. Since the Mongols hold him in high veneration, the shaykh prevents them from harming ordinary people. This is a great accomplishment."[4] There are indeed letters from the early fourteenth century written by high-ranking Mongol officials who tell their commanders to respect the shaykh. Other letters or documents serve as receipts of donations to Shaykh Safi's lodge in Ardabil. All in all, the *waqf* property of the Safavids was substantial, donated by common people as well as members of the elite. Thus, for over a century and a half, the Safavid order constituted a powerful, wealthy, and influential Sufi brotherhood (in some ways similar to the Naqshbandis). It seems, however, that by the 1450s things had changed for the Safavids. Shaykh Junayd, the ruler of the order, had begun to entertain political aspirations. He began traveling to Anatolia, engaged in a marriage alliance with the Aq Qoyunlu Turcomans, and even led raids against Christian kingdoms on the coast of the Black Sea and in the Caucasus. After his death, his son Haydar engaged in similar campaigns. We are told that Junayd and Haydar managed to attract a large number of Anatolian Qizilbash to their side (probably many were former *ghazi*s disaffected by their marginalization by the Ottoman court), and these men apparently wanted Junayd and Haydar to fulfill their chiliastic expectations. The Aq Qoyunlu historian Fazl Allah Khunji reports, for instance, that after Junayd's death, "The ignorant people of Anatolia who were the forces of darkness and Satanic minions began to blare the unfounded Christian claim . . . calling Junayd 'God' and his son 'son of God'" (Khunji, *Tarikh-i Alam Ara-i Amini*, p. 264). This quote bears out the contention that religious views in Asia Minor were highly syncretic, combining Christian and Muslim elements. The helpless hostility of high-ranking religious elites (such as Fazl Allah) is also worth noting. It was finally Isma'il who successfully led his Qizilbash and *ghazi* forces to the conquest of Iran, eastern Iraq, and western Afghanistan.

Culture and Contact

The political, social, and religious changes that took place during the fifteenth century marked a transition out of the Middle Period of Islamic history. However, there is another aspect of the history of this century that had long-term

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Conclusion

The fifteenth century was a period of transition. While the political instability marking the previous half millennium accelerated in this time, other deeper social, economic, cultural, and religious currents laid the groundwork for a much more stable society. It was up to the Safavids in Iran, the Ottomans in Anatolia and the Balkans, and Timurid Mughal refugees in India to build on these foundations a new order of stable bureaucratic empires. The next chapter will deal with the Safavids.

NOTES

1. Khwandamir, *Habib al-siyar, Tome Three: The Reign of the Mongol and the Turk*, trans. and ed. W. M. Thackston (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1994), 636–37.
2. Ghiyas al-Din Yazdi, *Ruznamah-i Ghazavat-i Hindustan*, ed. L. A. Zimin and V. V. Bartol'd (Petrograd: Tipografiya Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk, 1915), 108.
3. Yazdi, *Ruznamah-i Ghazavat-i Hindustan*, 120–22.
4. Hamd Allah Mustawfi Qazvini, *Traikh-i Guzidah* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1983), 675.
5. Ibn Tāshköprüzāde, trans. Lewis, vol. 2, 49.

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CHAPTER 12

THE SAFAVIDS IN IRANIAN HISTORY (1501–1722)

KATHRYN BABAYAN

> "I am ready to give my life, let me be a sacrifice to the Ka'ba of union with you [Ali]: I have become a pilgrim, I shed blood: where is the sacrificial altar?"
>
> *(Divan-i Khata'i)*

The Revolutionary Message

The above is an example of the piety that Isma'il Safavid showed during the time he was inaugurating a new era in the history of the Islamic Middle East and carving his Shi'i dominion from southeastern Anatolia and the Caucasus to present-day Iraq, across the Iranian Plateau, and all the way to Herat in what is now Afghanistan. Isma'il composed these lines of poetry announcing his messianic mission as an invitation to his followers and a warning to those infidels who would resist his call to be "true men" and embrace Islam. Within a decade, Isma'il was able to marshal the support of Persian- and Turkish-speaking devotees who, like him, were ready to sacrifice their lives in devotion to the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632), particularly Ali, Muhammad's paternal cousin and son-in-law. In his poetry, recited throughout Anatolia by missionaries of the Safavid brotherhood, Isma'il appropriated the conventional voice of the *ghazal*, or love poetry, to cast himself as a mournful sinner (*khata'i*) and a bedazzled lover of Ali. He took on the persona of a penitent seeking to purge his sins and suffer death in his "soul on behalf of all souls. I am Khata'i [the sinner] who offers his soul in sacrifice."

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He planned it so his personal path to salvation would be in the company of his intimate companion Ali. His poetry imagined Isma'il the pilgrim circumambulating the Kaaba, the house of God, there confessing and publicly repenting to achieve his desired union with Ali. Recognizing Ali as the gate of Islam, in fact as God himself ("Know [him] to be God"), Isma'il invited the audience of his poetry to emulate him by converting to Islam and joining the Safavid cause. Believing in Ali's near omnipotence, Isma'il proclaimed, "If I make a pact with you [Ali], my beloved, among [my] adversaries there will be one funeral after another." For Isma'il, "Those who do not recognize Ali as Truth (or God) are absolute unbelievers. They have no creed, no faith, and are not Muslim." According to him, to be a Muslim essentially meant to know and worship Ali, for he possessed knowledge of the universe and it was through him that every believer could access spiritual and cosmic secrets. Mystics like Isma'il were considered blessed by a sacred genealogy through blood to Ali, and as his privileged friends they received the veneration and respect of the populace. Isma'il portrayed his friendship with Ali not only as having a revelatory nature within which the latter disclosed universal mysteries to Isma'il, but also a reincarnational one through which Isma'il donned the very persona of Ali. His poetry exclaimed, "Whoever is unaware of the mystery of loving you, O Shah [Ali/Isma'il], is deprived for all eternity, unacceptable at your court." Drawing on the ideas in the relationship between reincarnation and ordained intercession, Isma'il appropriated the role of the Mahdi, or Messiah, interceding with God on behalf of the common believers. In effect, Isma'il's poetry fused Ali with Isma'il, God, and a host of holy kings and warriors from the Persianate cultural past that had been transmitted to Persian-speaking peoples, whether ethnically Turkish, Kurdish, or Persian, through a shared repertoire of Persian literary symbols and texts, including poetry, anecdotes, epics, etc.

By now you may be wondering about the genuineness and depth of Isma'il's religiosity in the context of Islam's monotheism, where God is singular and positioned above and beyond humanity's reach, where God's divinity is unrivaled (*la ila illa Allah*) and Muhammad is His prophet (*rasul Allah*). And what about Isma'il's belief in reincarnation? Readers should realize the importance of this: it was an apocalyptic moment in Islamic history in which expectations of the end of time and a belief in cosmic renewal were pervasive among a heterogeneous Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and Jewish population living under Muslim rule. And, of course, the experience of conversion to Islam was multifarious, and some Muslims living in the eastern lands of Islam continued to believe in reincarnation and cyclical time. In his poetry, Isma'il played on fears of the Day of Judgment, of the trumpet's imminent call sounding the end of the world, and of hell's burning fires. As fearsome as the cosmic moment of Muhammad's revelations that were compiled in the Qur'an, Isma'il's poetic revelations alerted believers to the urgency of action and repentance through the intermediacy of their savior Ali. The drama of the martyred family of Ali, portrayed as the chief victims of the aggression perpetrated by the Umayyads, who usurped the right of leading the Muslim community from Ali and his children, was memorialized in the forms of oral narratives and yearly rituals that

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Ardabil lay on important east-west and north-south trade routes traveled by merchants on their way west to Anatolia or north to the Caucasus. Shaykh Safi al-Din actively engaged his followers' conversion, and his mystical teachings and practices introduced them to Islam's basic tenets. Merchants, craftsmen, bureaucrats, and rulers came to patronize the holy man Shaykh Safi al-Din, after whom the Safavid dynasty would later be named.

Shaykh Safi al-Din practiced the familiar Sufi ritual of *zikr*, the practice of remembering God by uttering His divine names. A public arena (*khalvatsara*) was designated in Ardabil, near the house of Shaykh Safi al-Din, where devotees congregated, meditated, cleansed their souls in prayer, and focused their attention on God. It is not clear whether in the early period of Shaykh Safi's teaching the figure of Ali played the central devotional role that he did in Isma'il's messianic mission. But the processes of converting to Islam that Isma'il's poetry was to describe much later seem to have been well under way at the turn of the fourteenth century, when Shaykh Safi claimed the role of spiritual guide for a new community of Persian, Kurdish, and Turkish believers. Believers from different social strata gravitated toward him, but only a few were deemed spiritually advanced enough to participate in another exercise used among Sufi orders, *sama*, or transcendence to God through dance and the recitation of Sufi poetry set to music (*qawali*). In what were considered more private gatherings, these elite devotees listened to music, sang the poetry of the medieval mystic Attar (d. 1190), and danced under the supervision of Shaykh Safi al-Din, reaching states of ecstasy. The spiritual status of the devotees determined the degree of intimacy and access to Shaykh Safi, who gave them protection (*baraka*) in return. It would be naive to presume that class distinctions were nullified in fraternities, but it does not seem that social status was the principal factor that decided devotees' piety, proper conduct, and respectability. Different configurations of alliances must have often been negotiated and settled upon in such socially, ethnically, and professionally varied communities. Typically in a network, a devotee entered into a mutually beneficial economic cooperation with the readily available and reliable group of surrogate brothers, who were also craftsmen, farmers and merchants. Devotees gave gifts in the form of endowments (*waqf*), which could be produce, merchandise, or land, in exchange for the Safavid shaykh's *baraka* and material protection. We should not underestimate the centrality of material wealth to the "economy" of spirituality in mystical contexts, and the gifts that devotees gave contributed to the Safavid order's increasing regional power and influence. And for those devotees who possessed wealth in land, pious endowments safeguarded their property from the vicissitudes of political turmoil characteristic of this period when regional conquests often led to the confiscation of private property and levying additional taxes from farmers (produce) and craftsmen (manufactured goods).

Ties between the marketplace, or bazaar, and the Safavid order were consolidated upon Shaykh Safi's death, after craftsmen built a shrine around the house of their now-deceased spiritual guide. Death did not discourage the people from venerating their saint; his sacred abode continued to be revered, and his patrilineal descendants became the living guides and inherited both Safi's charisma and

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the actual administration of the order. Undeterred by the passing of Shaykh Safi's material life, disciples flocked unchecked to Ardabil from Azerbaijan and the Caspian Sea region, turning the pilgrim city into a site where trade, religiosity, and social interactions merged. Once there the disciples performed the *zikr* and *sama* rituals and confessed and repented their sins for renewed allegiance to the Safavid family and members of their fraternity, thus insuring themselves against this world's and the hereafter's injustices. There resulted a system of "voluntary" kinship in Ardabil based on close ties between the Safavid brotherhood on the one hand and, on the other, laborers and merchants who ran the commercial and religious economy under patronage from certain members of the Safavid family. In time, this network of kinships facilitated broader regional alliances endowed with political agency powerful enough to support Isma'il's aspirations for messianic rule.

Isma'il's revolution could not have succeeded, however, without his corps of Turkmen devotees, the westward-moving Turks whom his grandfather, Shaykh Junayd (d. 1460), had recruited from Ottoman dominions in Asia Minor. Well before Isma'il's own messianic revolution, Shaykh Junayd had altered the character of the Safavid order from Sufi brotherhood to messianic movement with far-reaching political aspirations. This reorientation of the Safavid order likely coincided with his banishment from Ardabil to Anatolia and Syria in 1448 due to a dispute with his uncle Ja'far over the headship of the order. There, he spent some years (1448–59) engaging in missionary activities and recruiting Turkmen adepts, known as Qizilbash, or Red Heads, because of the color of their high caps, who contributed military might and later aided Isma'il in conquering his empire. The Qizilbash Turkmen viewed Junayd as God's reincarnation. Fazl Allah ibn Ruzbihan Khunji (d. 1521), a Sunni historian at the court of the Turkmen ruler Sultan Ya'qub Aq Qoyunlu (d. 1490), captured the reverence that Junayd's followers had for him:

> [His adepts] openly called Shaykh Junayd God (*Ilah*) and his son [Haydar], son of God (*ibn Allah*). They praised him thus: "He is the Living One, there is no God but he." Their folly and ignorance were such that, if someone spoke of Shaykh Junayd as dead, he was no more to enjoy the sweet beverage of life. And if someone said that a part of Junayd's body went missing, they would give up the threshing ground of his existence to the wind of nonexistence.[1]

In 1456, Junayd fought a holy war (*ghaza*) against the Byzantines at Trebizond in Anatolia, near the Black Sea, and he was felled on the battlefield of another *ghaza* in the Caucasus in 1460. We can surmise that, in a matter of two decades or so, his memorialization as a martyr for the Alid cause was being circulated by word of mouth in a series of epic narratives (*Junaydname*) around Anatolia and the Iranian Plateau.

Isma'il became shah in 1501 and ruled till 1524. He succeeded in conquering the lands of modern-day Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan with his Qizilbash disciples, who venerated him, like his grandfather before him, as God's incarnation on earth. The story went that his Qizilbash disciples had thrown themselves unarmed into the

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battle, believing in Isma'il's miraculous powers to shield them. Acquiring the singular title of the Safavid order's first spiritual guide to assume temporal rule and dominion, Shah Isma'il wanted even more, and he claimed to be the reincarnation of a host of prophets and heroic kings from Iran's cultural past. "Prostrate thyself! Pander not to Satan! Adam has put on new clothes, God has come," his poetry commanded the masses who had just come under his rule. At a time marked by the close of Muslim rule's first millennium and pervasive millenarian beliefs, Shah Isma'il also identified himself as the Mahdi (Messiah) for whom early modern Muslims had long been biding their time. To further validate his messianic claim, Shah Isma'il claimed membership through Ali to Muhammad's family, from whose bloodline the Messiah was expected to spring forth at the end of time, and he depicted the apocalyptic moment poetically: "The heroic warriors [*ghazi*] have come forth with 'crowns of happiness' on their heads. The Mahdi's period has begun. The light of eternal life has dawned [upon] the world."

Isma'il merged the ideas of divine justice and worldly kingship, employing the idiom of the Muslim Messiah to convey the promise of Paradise on earth. Moreover, the shah did not wear the titles solely rhetorically, but exercised the functions expected from a messiah-king. In his role of divinely just ruler, the shah shared war booty with his Qizilbash disciples and divided the conquered territories into appanages, which, as the governors and tutors of Safavid princes, his champions administered. The Venetian diplomat and eyewitness Francesco Sanuto related that Shah Isma'il's generous bestowals confirmed his image of God-on-earth for subject populaces. Although some of Muhammad's descendants (sayyids) were awarded privileges, including stipends and immunities from taxes, they were not the only group given economic relief or aid. A kind of social welfare was instituted under which craftsmen and merchants were exempted from supra-Islamic commercial taxes, and soup kitchens were set up for the poor and needy. Not surprisingly, during his reign Isma'il's treasuries were often empty.

The "Shi'ification" and "Iranization" of the Safavid Empire over a period of a hundred years prepared the landscape for a regional split into distinct Sunni Ottoman and Shi'i Safavid dominions. Shah Isma'il had publicly embraced Shi'ism, the religion of his newly conquered empire, and invited Arab Shi'i (Imami) scholars to emigrate to the Safavid domains from the Ottoman territories, which spanned greater Syria and included modern Lebanon, but many subjects, disapproving of his messianic claims, refused his patronage. The century-long Ottoman and Safavid hostilities set the boundaries for religious identity, and these remain strongly demarcated in the region's rivalries today. The developments in religious identification checked the fluidity the Irano-Turkish world stretching from Central Asia to the Balkans had known. The permanence of the shifts was not yet evident in the sixteenth century, but the impact of ideological change was soon experienced. On both Ottoman and Safavid sides, confessional ambiguities between Sunni and Shi'i that had characterized religious identities before the sixteenth century receded and were overtaken by the elaboration of increasingly inflexible sectarian positions.

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Grounding the Safavid Revolution

Whether Isma'il was God or the Messiah, he was a tough act for his son Tahmasp (r. 1524–76) to follow when he died in 1524. Shah Tahmasp's account, or *Tazkire*, of his reign and character provides us with a fascinating narrative of the processes of conversion to Shi'ism that the Safavid realm underwent in the two subsequent centuries. In his memoir, Tahmasp rejected his father's claim to be Messiah/God; instead, Tahmasp was the mystic lover of Ali and the Shi'i monarch who abided by the sharia (divine law). It is significant that Tahmasp took it upon himself to give this account of his father and himself; undoubtedly he wanted to ensure that future generations would rely on his own version of their two reigns rather than on contemporaneous or future court historians' impressions.

As we have seen already, prior to the revolution the Safavid order had encompassed a variety of followers, including Turkmen tribe members, urban craftsmen, shopkeepers, merchants, and landowners of Persian and Turkic ethnicity. Their beliefs were by no means homogeneous, and the variety of symbols Isma'il's poetry alluded to reflects the many ways in which Safavid disciples understood the visions of their spiritual guide. Moreover, once Isma'il had conquered the Safavid domains with his Qizilbash military, new regional groups such as Persian bureaucrats and local notables were incorporated into the system of rule and administration of the dominions, and they brought their own cultural ideas and attitudes. And by the time Shah Tahmasp was writing his memoirs in 1562, a group of immigrant Arab Shi'i clerics and Caucasian slaves was being integrated into the Safavid court and religious establishment. During Isma'il's own lifetime, different historical versions of his rise to power and spiritual status as the Mahdi were penned and circulated, including ones by the king himself and several of his court historians. But an official master history of Isma'il and the Safavids' ascendance was yet to be determined, reflecting the still diffuse and decentralized nature of power in this period. Tahmasp emerged from a thirteen-year civil war (1524–36) that had erupted over the issue of succession at Isma'il's death; these struggles over power eventually determined which version of Isma'il's story would be adopted as the Safavids' official history of ascendance. In the final, official version, Isma'il did not hold the Messiah's role; he was portrayed more humbly as the Messiah's precursor, who, by establishing the "right order," namely, Imami Shi'ism, would carve the way for the advent of the Messiah, the Hidden Imam.

Unfortunately, Tahmasp's earthly dominion was beset on many fronts, both near and far. He was constantly being threatened by his rival brothers, Sam (d. 1567) and Alqas Mirza (d. 1550), who were mere pawns in the hands of the Qizilbash tribal chiefs and Persian notables. He managed to survive a turbulent thirteen-year regency and a series of poison plots. Tahmasp committed his life story to paper well into his reign, which spanned more than half a century, beginning in 1524 and ending in 1576. His memoir attributed his military and political successes to divine protection for his devotion and commitment to a particular Alid lineage and set of Muslim

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Tahmasp's Education and Conversion

Tahmasp's memoir reflects a refined education that began (1516–22) in Herat, the former capital of the Timurid court of Husayn Bayqara (r. 1469–1506). Husayn Bayqara was the last and perhaps greatest Timurid patron of the arts; alas, the Safavids vanquished Herat between 1510 and 1513 and dethroned him. Though the daily spoken language at the Timurid court had been Turkish, the medium for literary expression had been Persian; it was used in matters of diplomacy, history, poetry and other arts, etc. The Safavid court continued this tradition of using the two languages to differentiate between mundane and sovereign, state-level affairs. However, later linguistic choices for royal expression would be the result of assertions of cultural and linguistic differences in the mixed Turco-Iranian spheres relying on Persian for their literatures. For instance, for the purpose of writing his life story, Tahmasp chose Persian over Turkish; his memoir often quoted lines from his favorite Persian poets, including Nizami, Hafez, and Sa'di. His decision reflected identification with the growing trend of "Iranization." In comparison, the Mughal ruler Babur (1526–1530) wrote his memoir in Chagatai Turkish. Nevertheless, until approximately the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Safavids through the medium of Persian would establish aesthetic tastes and styles highly emulated at their Ottoman, Uzbek, and Mughal neighbors' courts.

The child Tahmasp entered a vibrant courtly milieu of painters, calligraphers, poets, and musicians, who were at the time creating expressions of art in the name of the Safavids, their new patrons. His childhood in Herat between the ages of two and eight sparked his lifelong passion for painting. According to the court historian Qazi Ahmad, Tahmasp was "drawn toward this wonder-working art, in which he was a master." The king painted many miniatures; he had a sense of humor and a playfulness evidenced in a signed miniature that depicted his royal butler, fondly nicknamed Karpuz ("Melon") Sultan, with his disproportionately swollen belly. His formal education included the religious sciences—the Qur'an and hadith (the dictums of Muhammad and the Imams)—as well as secular literature, mainly poetry and history.

In the process of disavowing for himself his father's claims to divinity, Tahmasp disassociated his own disposition from his warrior father's, and thus found that he had to reshape the current model of masculinity (*mardanagi*). While it was certainly true, Tahmasp proposed, that on the battlefield there had been no warrior braver than Ali, Ali had also cautioned, "Battle is but a ruse," and so Tahmasp chose to fight wisely and justly rather than to respond militarily to each and every Ottoman provocation. The historic moment at the Battle of Siffin (657 CE) over the right to rule as caliph inspired how Tahmasp imagined his holy hero. To secure unity within the Muslim community and prevent more bloodshed, Ali had opted at Siffin for arbitration with his contestant over the caliphate, the Umayyad Mu'awiya. By dulling the image of Ali the valiant warrior (*asad Allah*) and highlighting Ali's wisdom and concern for the well-being of the Muslim community, Tahmasp redefined the

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ideals of manliness and authority that had been linked to Isma'il the Warrior, who preoccupied himself with sensuous, world-embracing, and voracious activities like hunting, feasting, and banqueting to compensate for his first defeat by the Ottomans at the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514. Tahmasp's preference for fishing over wild-boar hunting symbolized the new, perhaps more urbanized, style of masculinity tied to Sufism, with its emphasis on renouncing the world. Toward the end of his life, his renunciation of the world was so strict as to verge on paranoia. His court chronicler recorded, for instance, that he eventually rejected most things because he believed them ritually impure (*najis*): "He abstained from all the pleasure [*lizzat*] of life and for nearly twenty years he did not mount a horse." He would throw half of his food into water and fire, not eat at formal banquets, spend an entire day in the bathhouse and the next clipping his nails. In fact Tahmasp's rejection of virility, displays of modesty before his masters Ali and God, and habits of abstinence and abstemiousness were examples of current Sufi spirituality and habits that every Sufi disciple was compelled to take up on the path to masterhood.

Tahmasp felt that his understanding of reciprocity and duty in paternal-filial relations should apply to the Safavid household members as well. His relationships with the Qizilbash and with his kin, particularly his rebellious brothers Sam and Alqas Mirza, predominated in the latter part of the memoir. Although he continued to refer to his realm as Qizilbash domains, he clearly worried about how firm his grip was on his troubled regency, and he put to death old Qizilbash disciples from important Turkmen tribes like the Ustajlu and Takkalu that had given their loyalties to his father. But since it was widely known that the Qizilbash had largely enabled the Safavid conquest of the territories and had shared in their rule and administration, he felt pressured to account in his memoir for the events leading to the order. He called the punishment for Qizilbash general Ulameh Takkalu's subversive machinations a fortunate turn of events, even a godly act that secured his kingship in troubled times. But he worried about balancing power with his independent-minded generals and attempted to distract them from designs on his monarchical power. "What use is war between the generals?" he offered. "Let us tend to the populace."

Tahmasp's narrative also described the many challenges of a master-saint-king figure, for he was also in a constant precarious balancing act with his disciples and subjects. His multifaceted role required generosity, tenderness, and modesty, but also domination over them. His relationship with his blood brothers was even more challenging, since they were simultaneously disciples and brothers. Their submissiveness toward the master-saint-king was not absolute, and the memoir referred to what were sometimes violent disagreements between the king and his disciple-brothers. These and other episodes of familial betrayals led him to moralize about loyalties and obligations within the concentric circles of the Safavid patrimonial household and the Muslim community. Tahmasp had to take frequent opportunities to remind his brothers—and by extension, army generals, devotees, and subjects—of the ideals of loyalty. Annoyed by his renegade brother's untrue assertion to the Ottoman sultan Sulayman that he enjoyed Qizilbash backing, the king

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upheld these ideals, though not without exaggerating the point. "The Qizilbash," he wrote, "would have their heads chopped off before they removed their crowns in the path of Sufism. There is but one spiritual guide, and even if there were one hundred thousand princelings, [the Qizilbash] would not look at them." To his other treacherous brother, Alqas, who boasted that Sultan Sulayman had called him "son" and given him both troops and money, Tahmasp wrote back, scoffing: "Kingship is not mine, nor yours, nor Sulayman's. There exists a God, and sovereignty is His. He will give to whom He pleases. [W]hat good are all these worldly things when you have sold your faith? I am not as stupid as you to prattle about this worldly power." Indeed, Shah Tahmasp deemed Alqas's rebellion to be against God Himself. Tahmasp continued, addressing his counterpart Sulayman, and expressed his disappointment at Muslim rulers warring against one another, for shouldn't religious solidarity supersede desires for territorial gains? "We shall not sell religion for worldly concerns," he declared. According to Tahmasp's paradigm for social relations and obligations between brothers, fathers and sons, disciples and master-saint-king, etc., everyone was situated on a vertical hierarchy of paternal authority that had God at the apex, then Ali, Tahmasp, his brothers, his sons, generals, disciples, and lastly subjects. Tahmasp set about putting into practice his imperial schema for governance and submission in the Muslim community: the hierarchy between master (i.e., the shah) and disciple (i.e., the subject).

The Structure of Shah Tahmasp's Imperial and Spiritual Governance

To legitimize his principles on an imperial scale, Shah Tahmasp ordered the widespread practice of Sufi rituals of devotion across his domains. He followed his father's administrative policies and divided his kingdom among the thirteen main Qizilbash tribes. Each tribe came under the jurisdiction of a chief, or *khan*, who represented the political and economic interests of the entire tribe. The *khan* administered the province in exchange for military succor in times of war against the Ottomans and Uzbeks or internal revolt. Tahmasp also appointed a spiritual deputy, a *khalifa*, from each Qizilbash tribe in his realm's administered provinces. Acting as the monarch's religious delegates, these deputies mentored and disciplined the Qizilbash devotees. For example, for the yearly Ayd-e Fetr (Eid al-Fitr) ceremonies marking the end of Ramadan, the Muslim month of obligatory fasting, Sufis and *khalifa*s from villages across Safavid Iran struck out to renew their vows of allegiance to Shah Tahmasp, walking the entire way to Tabriz, the first Safavid capital city (1501–50), in northwestern Iran. There, at the sacred abode of their mystic-king, they performed public acts of piety, remembering God (*zikr*), and dancing ecstatically to music (*sama*), just as Shaykh Safi's devotees had done in Ardabil earlier. The spiritual exercises encouraged Tahmasp's disciples to see

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themselves as belonging to one single community too large and expansive to be bound by tribal or other local social orders. Experiencing the religious feasts communally reinforced the arrangements of authority and obligation according to the descending order of God-Ali-Tahmasp that the shah was hoping to apply universally. Tahmasp satisfied the fasting travelers' hunger with bountiful feasts of food, thereby symbolically nourishing their souls. On the day before Ayd-e Fetr, his followers would sing a litany all night: "Praise to God. There is no god but Allah (*la illa ila Allah*). Praise to Ali. Praise to Tahmasp." His devotees presented him with gifts according to their financial abilities. Some would promise Tahmasp their daughters, their most cherished possessions; others who owned no material wealth vowed their lives and became hermits, devoting themselves to praying for the longevity of their mystic-king. As for the devotees who did military service (*qurchi*) at the Safavid court, Shah Tahmasp closely regulated the details of their lives and conduct.

Historically, artists and craftsmen had, as lovers of Ali, been initiated with vows of loyalty into Sufi brotherhoods and guilds that were regulated by set codes of behavior. Members from the different guilds participated in chivalric clubs (*futuvvat*) that combined social and work ethics with spirituality, and friendships were strengthened on both the individual member and guild levels. Certain initiatory rituals, such as stick-beating, placed the novices in preset societal roles vis-à-vis their patron saint Ali, the king, and their kin "brothers." The sixteenth-century manual of chivalry, *Futuvvatname-ye Sultani,* reported that a novice's initiation into a brotherhood/fraternity included taking an oath. Traditionally the novice entered into a covenant with God under the supervision of "the father of the covenant"; at Shah Tahmasp's court, his chief deputy, the *khalifat al-khulafa*, was this father figure. Novices were expected to imitate the example set by Ali, obeying strict behavioral prescriptions and proscriptions in their lifelong devotion and quest for salvation. In the context of Safavid governance, Shah Tahmasp was the master toward whom devotees were obligated to express their loyalty and piety.

Tahmasp wanted to create on an imperial scale a society based on "fraternal marriages" between his disciples, who were simultaneously members in brotherhoods. The shah's ritual of choice for initiating his disciples into this society was *chub-e tariqat*, or stick-beating. This ritual and other ceremonial occasions were described by the Venetian Cypriot merchant Michele Membré, who learned about them while on a visit to the imperial court in Tabriz during the winter of 1540. Membré, who could speak some Turkish, had been sent on a diplomatic mission to convince the shah to join hands with Venice against the Ottoman sultan Sulayman, their mutual enemy. Membré compared the rituals with confraternities in early modern Florence, which had similar ritualistic practices of sworn friendships: "None of the *qurchis* [members of the imperial military retinue] were to marry without the permission of the shah, who makes the rules for the *nozze* [Italian for 'wedding']." Membré wrote that the ritual took place in a large room at Tahmasp's court where the Sufis sat in rows. After they publicly praised God and Shah Tahmasp, his devotees were led by the *khalifat al-khulafa* in *zikr* for an hour or so, singing

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was buried there. Abbas had taken a vow through which he had publicly reiterated his commitment to the Shi'i faith. The subsequent endowment of his personal estates as benefaction in the names of the "Fourteen Immaculate Ones" (Muhammad, Fatima, and the Twelve Imams) may have been linked to this vow. The first lands Abbas I endowed in 1602–3 surrounded Imam Reza's sacred tomb and the courtyard of his mosque. Mashhad was by then replacing as the Safavid sacred site the city of Ardabil, which, as you will recall, held the holy tomb of the Safavid brotherhood's founder, Shaykh Safi al-Din. Transferring the Safavid capital to Isfahan, located in the heartland, reflected the king's centripetally oriented views, and the move away from Anatolia toward Fars signaled both the increasing Iranization and Shi'ification of the empire. The personages who played definitive roles in the process of making Isfahan the capital city became the pillars on which a new, despotic Safavid rule was being founded. The central square, Maydan-e Naqsh-e Jahan, and the mosque, Masjid-e Jadid-e Shah, represented this epoch of Safavid absolutism.

At this stage of centralization, which I call the Isfahani phase of Safavid rule (1590–1722), the shah, along with *ghulam*s, Turkmen functionaries, and Shi'i ulema at court, began to alter the political and religious landscape of Iran. Shah Abbas's reforms to the military were to have far-reaching social implications, particularly for the Qizilbash, who had historically enjoyed eminence and had governed and administered the provinces. It was not only that generally the Qizilbash could no longer rely on political and economic privileges, but that many of their tribes had to submit to the authority of slaves, the new governors of their provinces. The slaves were groomed at court and owed their allegiance to the shah ruling the Iranian lands and not, as had been the case with previous Safavid rulers, to the spiritual master-king whose rule extended over the domains lying between heaven and earth. In this more earthbound conceptualization of imperial dominion, the slaves received extensive training and were incorporated into the army and administration in large numbers, making it harder for the Qizilbash to secure influential positions in the army and in provincial and court administrations.

But where did all these slaves come from? According to Shah Abbas's official court chronicler, Iskandar Bek Munshi, approximately 330,000 slaves were captured by the shah during his Georgian campaign (1614–15). This date, then, marked the first significant influx of slaves into the Safavid sociopolitical system. The ramifications of this influx deeply affected the whole tribal structure of the Qizilbash. For instance, the Qizilbash khan, who under the old system had guaranteed the political and economic interests of the tribe, was rendered functionless by a slave who officially replaced him in the reformed, centralized system. And the clout that Qizilbash generals had exercised in their tribes was undermined, creating tears in the intricate web of tribal and Sufi allegiances and loyalties that had historically contributed to solidarity among the Qizilbash.

Tightening Safavid control of commercial and ritual guild activities also effectively severed neighborhood ties of patronage that had bound craftsmen to Sufi circles. These social vulnerabilities allowed Shah Abbas to extend the reaches of his local power, and many guilds associated with urban chivalric clubs and Sufi

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brotherhoods in Isfahan lost their autonomy in the process. A century earlier, the networks between Sufis and craft guilds had given the Safavid order in Ardabil the financial and political capital to foment a revolution. But a century later, well ensconced in their imperium, the Safavids controlled people's lives and social practices. They regulated urban craft and Sufi organizations and homogenized and "tamed" popular customs once funded by the guilds that reinforced communal ties, such as the mourning processions commemorating the martyrdom of Husayn, Muhammad's grandson. Besides the slave corps, the Shi'i ulema, or clerical establishment, helped the Safavid monarchs implement their policies of centralized administration and economy, with the effect that the urban craft organizations began losing their political sway in society and heterogeneous, vibrant Sufi practices were suppressed.

While established clerics inculcated their values and practices in the process of educating Safavid subjects in Shi'ism, they found that they had to compete with Sufis over religious posts and social arenas of conversion. This struggle ignited an animosity within Isfahan's religious community that targeted Sufi spiritual views and practices. Accusations flew that Sufi masters embraced heretical precepts, like reincarnation and divine incarnation. "They say they are friends of God and claim closeness to Him. They hear meaningless sayings and words of ecstasy, thinking that they are intuitions and miracles. They think they are hearing divine words. Nay, they believe themselves to be God," claimed one anti-Sufi polemic. Bazaars, Sufi lodges, confraternities, and coffeehouses—the places where Sufi beliefs remained alive and practiced—came under watch; they were often attacked and ransacked. Shi'i theologians dismissed the old rituals of *zikr* and *sama* as mere entertainment that explained the popularity of mysticism. Isfahan's residents, the clerics asserted, attended Sufi assemblies only because they liked listening to music, singing, and swirling. It was true that they bragged about joining Sufi groups, but their behavior was devoid of spirituality; what they really wanted from Sufism was to eat stew for free, reach ecstasy on drugs, and have illicit sexual relations with young men. It was the pleasurable and sensuous aspects of Sufi piety that the theologians emphatically rejected, yet one of Sufism's premises was that carnal temptations were a means to achieve self-control, a goal ultimately of piety and devotion to the divine.

Anxieties about sexual behavior in Sufi circles revealed as well the Shi'i clergy's fears that intimacy between spiritual brothers and friends could easily lead to political solidarities strong enough to resist clerical—perhaps even imperial—authority. In 1550, Shah Tahmasp issued the first in a series of decrees concerning "proper" and "improper" Muslim behavior; it prohibited wine, sodomy, and beard shaving. Besides calling for set prices and secure roads throughout the empire and for the welfare and education of orphans, the decree laid down a set of ethics detailing appropriate gender roles and displays of sexuality in public spaces. The decree went on to caution Safavid subjects against celibacy, long associated with Sufi ways of life, and exhorted the male populace to be both sexually and socially productive. Vacationing, relaxing, and seeking comfort were disfavored pastimes, since they reduced men to a state of inactivity, making them no better off than women and the

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worldly path to God, and thereby bolstered Safavid state efforts to centralize and govern the dominions.

Abbas's state-level reinstatement of public Friday prayers, which had since Tahmasp's reign been abandoned, put him in a position to build the first Safavid mosque dedicated to public Friday prayers. The purpose of the congregational space was to unite and convert all of Isfahan's residents to Shi'ism, and the actualization of the project required the legal and theological expertise of the prominent Arab cleric Shaykh Baha'i, an emigrant to Isfahan from Jabal Amil in present-day Lebanon. Masjid-e Shah still stands today in Isfahan, a central icon of faith and a memorial to the shah and his endorsement of Shi'ism. His grandfather, Shah Tahmasp, for instance, had personally done his Friday prayers under the guidance of a learned jurist (*mujtahid*) at the communal mosques in Tabriz and in Qazvin, his second capital city (1550–90). The timing of Masjid-e Shah was very significant; Shah Abbas had recently reconquered the Safavid Empire's Ottoman, Georgian, and Uzbek frontier territories, and his victory led to the mosque's commission in 1612 with funds from the war booty. In the process of building the mosque, Abbas I followed in Tahmasp's footsteps and authorized one religious school of thought over others, stirring up intense religious controversy. But the shah managed to secure the necessary religious backing for his monumental enterprise. Shaykh Baha'i wisely supported his new patron-king and authorized the consummation of Friday prayers during the anniversary of the Twelfth, or Hidden, Imam's alleged occultation in 874 CE. Shaykh Baha'i justified the permissibility of this practice, once the subject of debate by Shi'i theologians throughout the sixteenth century, with the assertion that communal prayers created unity for the Safavid imperium's religiously diverse territories.

Shah Abbas I's successors—Safi, Abbas II, Sulayman, and Soltan Hosein—all ruled in radically reconfigured households of military slaves, concubines, and even eunuchs. At this time, Safavid power was premised upon Shi'i Islam's central principle of patrilineal descent. The Shi'i-based formulation of power received religious sanction, as exemplified in coronation ceremonies. In the bygone tradition, the *khalifat al-khulafa*, the revered chief deputy of the Safavid order, had placed the red coronet, symbol of impersonal spiritual dominion, upon the king's head, but in the new order a Shi'i clergyman girded the monarch's waist with a belt and sword. Signifying that the king's identity was individual and specific to a reign determined by a specific time and place in history, his name was stamped on the coins minted and circulated in the domain. Upon his ascension to the throne, the shah's name was declared during Friday prayer sermons held at Masjid-e Shah, commissioned by Abbas I in 1612. Isfahan witnessed the dawn of a new epoch whereby temporal rule's political legitimacy depended on patrilineal descent from the venerated lineage of Fatima and Ali's sons and grandsons, and on the sharia's sanctification of the reign. Forms of Shi'i legitimization may also have well served the shrewd royal calculation that the quality of authoritative charisma resided only in the persons of the shah and a few religious scholars, rather than in numerous

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members of the Safavid dynasty. The legitimization served the clergy as well, who were engaged in efforts to reduce the influence of Sufis among the subject populace. The Shi'i clerics were not at all interested in sharing with Sufi masters the immensely powerful role of acting as the intermediaries between the masses of believers and God. In fact, there was only one exception for whom they would have to step aside: the Mahdi or Hidden Imam himself.

In 1722, the Afghans invaded the capital Isfahan and vanquished the Safavids. By the time the Safavid era ended, a strict, orthodox interpretation of the sharia was in force. Shah Soltan Hosein (1694–1722) issued decree after decree concerning the legal/virtuous and illegal/unvirtuous habits and aspects of the conduct of life under Safavid rule, and the clergy happily signed their endorsements of the shah's decrees. In a grandiose public show of repentance, the king ordered his men to clear several thousands of wine bottles out of his court cellars and to smash them in Isfahan's central square. Men's and women's clothing had to conform to ever stricter notions of Islamic "modesty." Guests at weddings and other social events where both sexes gathered could no longer be entertained with music and dance, and gender segregation was enforced at all private and public events. Sodomy, adultery, prostitution, and gambling were banned. Opium and hashish were declared illegal, and coffeehouses, taverns, and Sufi lodges, all considered dens of Sufi fomentation, had their doors forcibly shut. Under the Safavids' patronage of Shi'i scholars and institutions, mosques, seminaries, and individual clergymen could have their say in politics. Everyone was waiting for the Mahdi, known also as the Twelfth and Hidden Imam, to instate divine justice on earth and rid them of the social miseries and injustices that they had long suffered. But the Imam had not yet revealed himself, and meanwhile Shi'i scholars were the authorized intermediaries between the believers and God, since they specialized in divine law, and Sufi mystics, even if admittedly charismatic and popular with the crowds, did not.

The Shi'i clerics' claim to authority was crucial to later political developments in Iran. The religious scholars (*mujtahid*s) asserted that, thanks to their training and specialized knowledge in Islamic jurisprudence and the sacred texts of the Qur'an and hadith, they were fit to interpret and implement God's law and will on earth. This argument surfaced again, when the twentieth-century cleric Khomeini (d. 1989) claimed for the religious establishment the right and exercise of state governance.

NOTES

1. Fazl Allah b. Ruzbihan Kunji-Isfahani, *Tarikh-i Alam Ara-yi Amini*, ed. and trans. John E. Woods (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1993).

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CHAPTER 13

THE AFGHAN INTERLUDE AND THE ZAND AND AFSHAR DYNASTIES (1722–95)

KAMRAN SCOT AGHAIE

The eighteenth-century transition of power from the Safavids to the Qajars proved to be a tumultuous and traumatic time for the territories located on the Iranian Plateau. The transformation began with the Afghan conquest of the capital city of Isfahan in 1722, followed by invasions and land grabs by the Ottomans in the west and the Russians in the northwest. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Qajars took control of the Safavid domains, thus unifying the Iranian empire again. The period from 1722 to 1795 was an unusually violent and politically unstable period, in which tribal leaders, governors, military adventurers, and foreign states vied for control over territory. It is in this period of upheaval that two unusual men of relatively humble origin, Nader Quli Khan Afshar (1698–1747) and Karim Khan Zand (ca. 1705–79), established themselves as rulers over the vast majority of the territories formerly controlled by the Safavids. While the dynasties they each established did not last very long after their deaths, they did make their mark, the influences of which were still being felt in the nineteenth century, which was the era of the Qajars.

This period is also important as an example of what could happen when the delicate balance between the strong centralized government and the centrifugal forces of the tribal nomads was upset. During this time, central authority collapsed, which provided opportunities for military adventurers to seize power. Some, like

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Nader Shah, were concerned primarily with the accumulation of booty and other forms of wealth, and therefore invested very little in the economy, society, or government institutions. Others, like Karim Khan Zand, ruled a less centralized empire while simultaneously allowing at least an occasional respite from warfare in order for the economy to recover and develop. This period tells us a great deal about the precarious nature of Iran's political institutions at the end of the Safavid reign. It also demonstrates the complex economic balances that existed between agricultural production, animal husbandry (carried out mostly by pastoral nomads), and trade.

The Afghan Invasion and the Conquest of Isfahan

The Afghan invasion of the Safavid Empire was the result of complex political rivalries in the northeastern Iranian province of Khorasan, which bordered on Afghanistan and Central Asia. It was in these areas that tribal leaders of diverse backgrounds were proving more and more difficult for Shah Soltan Hosein, who was the reigning Safavid ruler in Isfahan, to control. Soltan Hosein sent a new governor named Gurgin to Qandahar (Kandahar) in the hopes of reasserting his authority in Khorasan. However, Gurgin became the subject of controversy and hostility, and an Afghan leader in the region named Mir Vais (Mirwais) Ghilzai petitioned the shah to remove him. Mir Vais spent six months in Isfahan, after which he went on the Hajj to Mecca, where, interestingly, he was able to obtain a fatwa from one of the prominent Sunni ulema declaring that it was religiously legal for him and his Sunni followers to take up arms against their heretical Shiʿi overlords, the Safavids. In 1709, Mir Vais Ghilzai had Gurgin killed and assumed the post of governor of Qandahar himself, a position he held until his death in 1715. Following a short interlude, in which his brother became governor, Mir Vais's son Mahmud Ghilzai took his place as the new governor, and took up where his father had left off.

Mahmud Ghilzai reportedly used the defeat of the Safavid Qizilbash troops and the seizure of Herat by Abdali Afghans as a pretext to invade the central Safavid lands. He seized Kerman in 1719 and conquered the Safavid capital Isfahan in 1722, following a six-month siege that created great hardship for the local population. One of the reasons for this shocking defeat was that the Safavids found themselves vulnerable when many of their troops and tribal contingents proved unreliable, with the notable exception of the Bakhtiari tribes, whose territories were located near Isfahan. In the meantime, Soltan Hosein arranged to have his third son Tahmasp Mirza escape the city before it fell to Mahmud Ghilzai and his troops, who after executing the shah's offspring remained in control of Isfahan and ruled the central Safavid lands.

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The escape of Tahmasp was significant, because of the importance of the Safavid line of descent as a legitimizing factor for future rulers. This is why Mahmud Ghilzai had Shah Soltan Hosein killed in 1726. Tahmasp Mirza later reestablished himself in Mazandaran, where the Qajars supported his bid to retake the Safavid throne. This was to become a recurring pattern at least until 1773, as various political rivals claimed to be representing princes, who had real or fabricated Safavid lineages.

While Mahmud Ghilzai ruled in Isfahan, one of his allies, Malik Mahmud of Sistan, took control over Mashhad, thus effectively taking charge of Khorasan. This is significant for two reasons. First, Malik Mahmud later claimed the right to be the king as a descendent of the Kayanid line. Second, Malik Mahmud and Nader Quli Khan Afshar became rivals for control of Khorasan, which set the stage for the rise of Nader Quli Khan, who expelled foreign armies and eventually reunited most of the former Safavid Empire.

The Rise of Nader Shah Afshar

Nader Quli was a leader of the Afshar tribe, who were originally Turkoman from Central Asia. However, during the early Safavid period, they lived in Azerbaijan until the seventeenth century, when many of them were relocated to Khorasan. Nader Quli was born circa 1698 to an Afshar family of relatively humble status. During his early years he worked for various officials and tribal leaders, until his talents for war and diplomacy allowed him to rise to high positions in the military ranks in Khorasan. He was ruthless in battle, but could be conciliatory or even generous in victory. For example, he often forgave his defeated enemies, and even absorbed the enemy's troops into his army, a pattern he followed throughout much of his career. He was shrewd and practical in his policies and was an exceptional and charismatic military leader who gained quite a reputation, especially among the tribal warriors who rallied to join his armies.

The first phase in Nader's rise to power took place in Khorasan. During the 1720s, he was still a mid-level military/tribal leader in Khorasan with a great deal of local support, but he also had powerful rivals and enemies, whom he systematically eliminated. As stated above, one of his most powerful rivals was Malik Mahmud, who in turn found himself challenged by the Safavid prince Tahmasp, along with his Qajar supporters from Mazandaran, with whose help he defeated Malik Mahmud in 1726. Once Malik Mahmud was out of the picture, Tahmasp's main Qajar supporter, Fath Ali Khan, emerged as Nader Quli's primary rival, which is why he was killed, almost certainly at the hands of Nader or his supporters. In summation, after the dust had settled on this complex military and political conflict, Nader Quli had eliminated both of his rivals, Malik Mahmud and the Qajar leader Fath Ali Khan. He also had possession of the all-important Safavid prince, Tahmasp, in whose name he now proceeded to pursue his military and political ambitions. Claiming to

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these factors and others, he was murdered in his tent by a group of his officers. His son Ali Quli Khan may also have been involved in this plot.

Since he had blinded his eldest son some years earlier in a paranoid rage, he was succeeded by his younger son Ali Quli Khan, who took the title Adel Shah and promptly executed all of Nader's other sons, sparing only his grandson Shahrukh. He then had to put down a Qajar rebellion under the leadership of Mohammad Hasan Khan Qajar. It is also worth noting that he ordered the castration of Mohammad Khan, who was the son of the Qajar leader, but who is better known as the founder of the Qajar dynasty later in the century. Adel Shah's reign did not survive to the end of the year, because his brother Ibrahim defeated him and placed Nader's grandson Shahrukh on the thrown. Amazingly enough, Shahrukh managed to remain the nominal ruler of Khorasan (although not without interruption) until 1796. He and his successor Nader Mirza served virtually as puppet rulers, and until 1803 their domains served as a buffer state between two empires that were carved out of Nader's original empire, one in the east and one in the west. In the east, one of Nader's former military officers named Ahmad Shah Durrani ruled most of Nader's eastern territories from his capital in Qandahar. In western Iran, the Zand tribe, under the leadership of Karim Khan, established an empire that encompassed the central and western portions of Nader's empire. Karim Khan's reign proved to be quite different from that of Nader Shah.

The Rise of Karim Khan Zand

The Zand tribe was originally from a region in the Zagros Mountains of western Iran, somewhere between the territories of the Lurs and the Kurds, but Nader had relocated them to his home province of Darra Gaz, in Khorasan. While their families stayed in that area more or less as captives, the Zand tribesmen served as part of the tribal contingents of Nader's army. Upon his assassination, they escaped back to their home territory in western Iran and allied themselves with one of Nader's successors, Ibrahim, who ruled in Isfahan for a short time. Karim Khan made an alliance with other tribal leaders, including the Bakhtiari leader Ali Mardan, and in 1751 they installed a Safavid prince on the throne in Isfahan under the title Isma'il III. However, this alliance did not last long. By 1753, Karim Khan was fighting on multiple fronts against Ali Mardan, who was based in the Bakhtiari region; Mohammad Hasan Khan Qajar, who was based in the Mazandaran area; and a tribal leader named Azad Khan Afghan, who was based in Azerbaijan.

The fortunes of the Zands shifted as they alternated between capturing Isfahan or parts of Azerbaijan and retreating to Shiraz and its environs. Eventually, Karim Khan succeeded in a series of victories against all of these enemies. He defeated Ali Mardan and his Bakhtiari tribesmen several times. In 1759, he defeated and killed Mohammad Hasan Khan in Mazandaran and took possession of Shah Isma'il,

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whom the Qajars had previously kidnapped, although in later years he found this region difficult to completely subdue. In 1763, he defeated the Afghan leader Azad Khan in Azerbaijan and took Tabriz. He then spent 1763–65 consolidating his power in central and western Iran, as part of which he killed or ran off all of the Afghan tribes he could find in his realm.

The resulting empire, which lasted until Karim Khan's death in 1779, consisted of Nader's territories in central and western Iran. Khorasan remained a nominally independent state under the Afshars. Karim Khan remained content serving as the regent of the shah and never declared himself king, even when Shah Isma'il died in 1773. The period of his rule was stable and peaceful compared with the rule of the Afghans and Nader Shah, but when Karim Khan died of illness and old age in 1779, political chaos once again threatened the stability of the Zand Empire. None of his three sons were equipped to succeed him, which resulted in a series of power struggles that plagued the dynasty until its demise in 1794. In the fighting and rivalries that broke out upon Karim Khan's death, Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar, who was being held in Shiraz, escaped and fled to Mazandaran, where he began his rise to power, which culminated in his being crowned as the first Qajar shah and founder of the Qajar Empire in 1796.

The Military Adventurer versus the "Regent of the People"

As a leader and person, Karim Khan is often juxtaposed with Nader Shah. While both men were military adventurers who unified Iran with armies composed largely of tribal units, they have generally been portrayed differently by chroniclers and foreign residents in Iran at the time, not to mention in the popular memory of later Iranians. Nader Shah, by most accounts, was the greater military man, and has often been referred to in the West as "the last great Asiatic conqueror." He was able to unify an astonishing array of tribes and military men into massive armies that conquered vast territories. He is credited with expelling the Afghans from Iran after they had seized Isfahan and brought the Safavids to their knees, although this picture is complicated somewhat by the fact that he and large parts of his armies were themselves either Afghans or Turks from Central Asia. He is also credited with expelling the Ottomans and Russians from some of the Safavid territories, which they had seized following the Afghan invasion. While he was not able to decisively defeat the Ottomans, he did have some victories on that front, and was able to reestablish relatively stable borders between the two empires. His conquest of Delhi, the capital of the Mughal Empire, was also an amazing achievement in and of itself, and Iranians remember that it was he who brought the Peacock Throne from India to Iran.

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Despite his military successes, Nader Shah has not generally been portrayed as an ideal ruler. He was harsh in his rule and extortionate in his taxation, with a voracious appetite for wealth. He was not a great builder, administrator, or patron of the arts. For example, he did not produce a capital in the tradition of Shah Abbas's Isfahan or Karim Khan's Shiraz. He failed to develop effective and efficient administrative systems to run the affairs of the empire. He did not effectively encourage agriculture, trade, manufacturing, or handicrafts. While the unity his conquests provided helped somewhat to encourage such economic activities, it was not consistent, nor was it sufficient to lead to an economic upswing. However, despite the negative aspects of his rule, Nader Shah was a very important leader who unified the empire for the first time since the collapse of the Safavid Empire and created an environment in which other leaders, like Karim Khan, could pursue their goals.

While Karim Khan may not have been the great conqueror and military man that Nader Shah was, he has often been represented as the ideal ruler, kind, just, humble, and capable. Chroniclers, Westerners and later Iranians, have stressed that he was just and capable in the administration of justice, and equitable in the distribution of wealth. There are countless anecdotes about his generosity and about how he cared for his subjects by feeding them in years of drought. He clearly encouraged trade, commerce, agricultural production, and the arts, and ruled the provinces in a less centralized fashion. His taxation was not considered to be as extortionate as that of previous rulers. One should also not underestimate the importance of the relative peace he provided, which allowed some Iranian refugees to return to Iran, including significant non-Muslim populations, such as the large Armenian and Jewish communities that settled in Shiraz and elsewhere. According to most accounts, he was not a particularly religious man, but he has generally been portrayed both as a modest patron of Shiʿism and as a just and ethical man, whose lifestyle was relatively simple.

Karim Khan was a great builder, whose successes as a patron of the arts dwarf the undertakings of the Afghan Ghilzais, Nader Shah, and the Afshars, all of whom seemed primarily focused on military conquest, procurement of booty, and accumulation of wealth. He rebuilt the walls and citadel of Tehran in the 1750s, when he lived there. After defeating the Qajars, he made Shiraz the seat of his government. He reorganized the city, strengthening its defenses by reducing the overly wide perimeter of the city, around which he rebuilt a ten-foot-thick wall with eighty guard towers, a twenty-foot wide ditch, and only six gates instead of nearly twice that number. He also built a palace citadel complex, much of which has survived until today. In fact, nearly half of the structures he built are still standing today. Also significant was his construction of many caravanserais, bathhouses, administrative buildings, a major mosque, and a bazaar, which became the financial center of Shiraz and is still in use today. He also restored famous older monuments, like the tombs of the great Iranian poets Hafez and Saʿdi, both of which had been severely damaged by warfare.

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tionate taxes and tariffs could be demanded along the route, which ultimately made many trade ventures unprofitable. While traders were relatively creative in avoiding war-torn regions, it was difficult in the eighteenth century to find any safe routes.

The other major form of economic production was animal husbandry, especially that carried out by pastoral nomads, who made up anywhere from a quarter to a half of Iran's population during this period. While the eighteenth-century collapse of central authority led to a period of growth in the political influence of nomadic tribes, it would be a mistake to assume that it was also a period of economic prosperity for nomads. Many tribal nomads used up their wealth on expensive military ventures, while others suffered economic loss at the hands of their enemies.

However, there were also more complex economic processes under way. Since pastoral nomads produced little more than animal products, they have traditionally been highly dependant on urban and rural agrarian populations, from whom they obtained goods they themselves could not produce, like weaponry and grain. They derived significant proportions of their wealth by trading with settled populations, and they profited from tribute they demanded in order not to raid those populations. In other cases, they did raid them, and took what they could, especially in cases where they were far away from their ancestral territories, as was so often the case during this tumultuous period. Pastoral nomads, therefore, suffered economic hardship as a result of the economic decline of the settled populations on whom they depended and with whom they shared a symbiosis of sorts.

With regard to trade, there were many other important patterns of continuity and change during this period. The Dutch made inroads into Persian Gulf trade, but were ultimately pushed out by the British. Russian and French trade interests continued to be important. Tabriz, Basra, Bushire, and Bandar Abbas continued to be particularly important in trade, and silk continued to be the primary export of Iran throughout this period, although in the case of the British it was rivaled by wool. While Isfahan continued to be an important city, its importance as a manufacturing and trade city was somewhat overshadowed by Shiraz under Karim Khan, and to a lesser extent by Mashhad under Nader Shah.

International trade was severely disrupted during this century. The Dutch and British East India companies both had offices in Isfahan when Mahmud Ghilzai conquered it. While Mahmud initially seemed interested in pursuing an economic relationship with them, he ultimately seized their assets in Isfahan. The situation in Isfahan became so hazardous that the British considered pulling out of the area entirely, but in the end, both the British and their main rival in the Gulf, the Dutch, decided to continue trying. However, there were many obstacles to their success. Most roads in Iran were unsafe; in some cases, even cities were not safe from raids and warfare; in the Gulf, Arab "pirates" raided ships and ports; and Iran had a chronic problem with specie drain.

The situation did improve somewhat in the latter half of Karim Khan's reign. He provided increased law and security, and he was genuinely interested in forging cooperative relationships with the British. For example, in 1763 and 1768, he and the

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British made efforts to cooperate in trade and on security in the Gulf. However, these efforts did not lead to mutually satisfactory results. As a result of the instability and unrest that followed Karim Khan's death, combined with other factors, trade gradually shifted away from Iranian port cities in the 1780s and 1790s in favor of Muscat, which was more secure and offered other advantages.

Despite the lack of expansion in trade, this period is extremely important, because it illustrates several patterns of change that were to become chronic during the next two centuries. While European powers, with the exception of Russia, were not yet a major military force in the region, their slow expansion of trade interests is significant. By the eighteenth century, the pattern of trade had already shifted to the advantage of European traders and the disadvantage of Iran. The chronic specie drain was both a cause and a symptom of this trend, as Iranians bought more and more foreign goods with cash without being able to recover this wealth through exports. Also, Iran's exports tended to be raw materials, like silk, wool, or opium, while their imports often consisted of more complex commodities. This pattern was to intensify in the Qajar period. During the eighteenth century, European companies made profits in Iran only with great difficulty. However, the competition between the Dutch, Russians, French, and British during the eighteenth century was important in setting the stage for Russian and British domination of Iran's foreign trade in the following century.

Religion and Politics

There were also important trends in relation to religion and politics during this period. As tribal and military leaders, notably Nader Shah, conquered territories, they often seized lands that were formerly pious endowments, or *waqf*, dedicated to charitable and religious uses. While many *waqf* lands were regular farmland, the revenues they produced supported, mosques, madrasas (Islamic schools), hospitals, orphanages, etc. They also constituted one of the most important sources of income for the religious class, the ulema, who increasingly migrated to South Asia, Syria, and the Shi'i holy cities of southern Iraq.

This turned out to be a very significant development for several reasons. Prior to the establishment of the Safavid state, the Muslim population of the Iranian Plateau was overwhelmingly Sunni. The Safavids set out to convert their Muslim subjects, and to some extent even their non-Muslim subjects, to Shi'i Islam. The tireless efforts of the prominent cleric Baqir Majlisi (d. 1699) to promote Shi'ism among the masses of Iranians was particularly significant. One reason the Safavids selected orthodox Shi'ism was that their origins traced back to a heterodox Shi'i Sufi order, with supporters among the Qizilbash nomads of Azerbaijan. However, there were clearly other reasons as well, not least of which was the desire to establish a religious legitimacy that was independent of the Sunni caliphate of the Ottomans and of

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relying on their sayings and traditions, which were passed down through the ages in the form of hadith. Thus the role of the ulema was in some ways limited to preserving preexisting traditions rather than asserting the centrality of their interpretations. The Usulis, on the other hand, argued that the hadith needed to be interpreted through a complex process called *ijtihad* by a qualified religious scholar called a *mujtahid*. Furthermore, they eventually developed the idea that among the *mujtahids* there should be an individual (or group of individuals) called a *marja' al-taqlid* ("source of emulation"), who was acknowledged by his colleagues as the most prominent among scholars. All believers, including the ulema, would then be bound to follow the rulings of these elite *mujtahids*. In other words, even the *mujtahids* were expected to defer to the authority of the *marja' al-taqlid*. The most famous *mujtahid* to emerge during this period and successfully promote Usuli ideas was Baqir Bihbahani (d. 1791).

The Usuli position ended up winning out, which led to the emergence of a more complex and hierarchical structure of authority among the Shi'i ulema, a system that has survived till today. This religious hierarchy, which increasingly became a salient feature of orthodox Shi'ism, especially in Iran and Iraq, evolved independently of the state. This fundamentally transformed the relationship of the ulema to the state that had previously existed under the Safavids. The long-term effects of this trend will become apparent in future chapters, in which the complex roles the ulema increasingly played in Iranian politics will be discussed.

Conclusion

While the eighteenth century may be viewed as a "dark age" of political chaos, military destruction, and economic decline, it is nevertheless an important period in Iran's history. It was a period of transition from the Safavid to the Qajar era. Many of the institutions and traditions established by the Safavids proved to have remarkable longevity; for example, the Safavid royal line continued to be an important source of political legitimacy, and Shi'ism proved to be deep-rooted in Iranian society. This period is also interesting in terms of political developments and tribal politics. As central authority collapsed, tribal groups were able to assert a dominant role in Iran's politics.

The eighteenth century was also a critically important period in relation to Iran's transition to the modern period. Many changes were on the horizon. European trade companies were becoming increasingly important, and global economic forces were playing a growing role in Iran's economy. The stage was set for Russian and British influence and dominance in the region during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Religion also underwent a significant transformation as the ulema and the state parted ways, leading to a reformulation of religious authority and the emergence of new religious/political hierarchies among the ulema.

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CHAPTER 14

QAJAR IRAN (1795–1921)

MANSOUREH ETTEHADIEH
NEZAM-MAFI

The Reign of Agha Mohammad Shah (1795–98 CE/1209–12 AH)

The Qajar period, which lasted from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century, presented many distinctive features never before seen in Iranian history. The most important of these is the gradual western influence that came to dominate the political, economic, and social life of the country. This caused the Iranians to awake to the dangers facing the independence of their country. The result was an attempt by the government and intellectuals to seek remedies to put a stop to the threat of European dominance.

The Qajars were a tribe of Turcoman origin based around Astarabad in northeastern Iran. They were associated with the Safavid dynasty, and came into prominence in the sixteenth century. Following the fall of the Safavids in 1722/1134 at the hands of the Afghans, Nader Afshar became king and ruled until 1747/1160. After his death, there followed a half century of civil war and a breakdown of law and order. Northeastern Iran remained in the hands of Nader's descendants, but central, western, and southern Iran were contested between the Qajar leader Mohammad Hasan Khan and Karim Khan Zand. Mohammad Hasan Khan was killed in 1759/1172, and his son Agha Mohammad Khan, who had been castrated in his youth by one of the Afshars, was taken hostage by Karim Khan. Karim Khan never assumed the crown and was known as the Vakil al-Ro'aya, the deputy of the people. He ruled for twenty-one years, during which time he brought some peace and stability to the realm.

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The Reign of Fath Ali Shah (1797–1834 CE/1212–50 AH)

Fath Ali Shah reigned for thirty-seven years. During this period, the power of the crown was consolidated and the administration of the country grew and became more complex and centralized. However, due to the war with Russia, Iran lost the Caucasian states to which it had an old claim, and as a result grew poorer and had to submit to a humiliating peace treaty that became the basis of her relationship with other European countries throughout the nineteenth century.

Several new ministries were created at this time. Besides the Mostowfi al-Mamalek and the Lashkar Nevis, there were now a Monshi al-Mamalek, who was the personal secretary of the shah, and the Saheb Divan, who paid the salaries of the government officials. The chief minister was the Sadr A‘zam, who was in charge of the day-to-day administration of the country. All the ministers were the shah's personal servants and remained in office at his will. However, many offices became hereditary and remained in the same family, but their titles were generally not inherited except in special cases. Most public officials, including those who positions already had a special title attached to them, were normally referred to by their titles, instead of their given names.

When war with Russia involved Iran in a diplomatic wrangle, the post of foreign minister, Vazir-e Moham-e Kharejeh, was also created, but the foreign relations of the country remained in the hands of the shah and the crown prince, Abbas Mirza, who acted as deputy for his father. In fact, the foreign policy of Iran was always in the hands of the shah; in this particular case, Abbas Mirza assumed responsibility because he was the commander of the Iranian forces in the war and in contact with the diplomatic missions that reached Iran through Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Unlike the ministers, who came mainly from a bureaucratic background and were never chosen from the princely class, the government of the provinces was generally entrusted to the shah's numerous sons and grandsons and in some instances cousins or sons-in-law. As long as there was peace in the province and taxes were collected on time, the governors acted in a semi-independent manner and enjoyed great autonomy.

During Fath Ali Shah's reign, it became customary for the crown prince to be appointed governor of Azerbaijan in northwestern Iran. It was one of the richest provinces of Iran, and of special importance during the war with Russia. The reason Abbas Mirza was appointed crown prince although he was not the shah's eldest son was that Agha Mohammad Shah, wanting to keep peace among the different Qajar tribes, had decreed that the crown should go to the prince whose mother was also a Qajar. This eliminated the shah's eldest son in favor of Abbas Mirza, who was intelligent and soon showed great aptitude and courage. He had as his minister Mirza Bozorg Farahani, known by the title Qa'em Maqam, and later his son Mirza Abol Qasem, who was Qa'em Maqam after his father's death. Both were astute politicians who served the prince with devotion. Abol Qasem supported the prince's efforts at

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reform. He also had the merit of trying to purify and simplify the Persian prose style of the time, which was stylized and complicated.

The Russian threat, which had ceased at the death of Catherine, flared up again when the peace-loving Tsar Paul was assassinated in 1801/1210. During the previous year, the suzerain of Georgia, George XII, recognized the tsar as his sovereign and in turn was entrusted with the government of his country. But George, too, died a few months later, and Russia officially annexed Georgia. The local uprising was crushed by the Russian commander in chief, General Pavel Tsitsianov, who began to threaten northern Iran. The Russo-Persian War had started.

The British, who were endemically nervous about the defense of India, particularly with regard to Afghan incursions in northern India, entered into a defensive treaty with Iran against the Afghans in 1801/1210, but when in 1805/1215 Iran asked them for help against Russia, the answer was negative. Iran had no choice but to turn to France. By 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte had been crowned emperor and had gained a superior position in Europe. Almost immediately, in 1805, Britain and Russia united against him, which was why Fath Ali Shah's appeal for help was unanswered by the British. By the time Iran changed its policy, France had already sent two emissaries to Iran in 1804/1219 who assessed the situation and made some initial contacts. Further envoys were exchanged, and the result of the ensuing negotiations was the Treaty of Finkenstein (signed at Finckenstein Palace in eastern Prussia), in 1807/1222.

According to this treaty, the French guaranteed Iran's territorial integrity, recognized its claim to Georgia, and undertook to persuade Russia to evacuate Iranian territories. Napoleon also promised to provide Iran with guns, rifles, and ammunition and to commission officers to train the Iranian army in modern warfare. Iran agreed to sever all relations with Britain and declare war, to instigate revolts of the Afghans against Britain, and to help the French army on its way to India.

In Europe, six months after the signing of the Treaty of Finkenstein, Napoleon signed a treaty of friendship with Tsar Alexander that made no allusion to Iran. In fact, now that the Russians had found a respite from the war in Europe they could concentrate all their efforts against Iran and Ottoman Turkey, which had declared war on Russia and Britain in 1806/1221. Iran and Turkey coordinated their war efforts for a short while, but Turkey was defeated and Iran was left alone to take the brunt of the Russian onslaught. The French general Gardane tried to mediate, and the hostilities ceased for a while, which gave the Russians time to reassemble their forces. By then the news of the peace between Russia and France reached Gardane, who ordered the French officers who were leading the Iranian army in the war to cease their command; when war was resumed in the autumn of 1808/1223, the Iranians were defeated and Gardane had to leave Tehran. This augured the eclipse of French influence in Iran.

The Treaty of Tilsit and the union between Russia and France had frightened the British, who had sent two emissaries to Iran. Sir Harford Jones came from London, but before the news of his mission became known by the government of India, they had dispatched Brigadier-General Malcolm, later Sir John Malcolm, who

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reached Iran before Gardane had become discredited. Malcolm was not allowed to proceed to Tehran and returned to India, but by the time Sir Harford Jones reached Iran, Gardane had lost his position and left, and Jones was received with enthusiasm, signing a preliminary treaty with the Iranian government.

According to this treaty, the British offered a subsidy of £120,000 annually while the war with France lasted. It was also agreed that British officers would train the Iranian armies, and the Iranians were to sever all ties with France. Malcolm, author of a book on the history of Persia, returned to Iran in a third embassy, bringing with him a number of officers for the training of the army.

The war dragged on for a time, but in March 1809/1224, Britain and Russia made peace once again in Europe, and the British officers were ordered to desist from commanding the Iranian army. Abbas Mirza was defeated in 1812 at Aslanduz and Lankaran (Lenkoran) on the Aras River, and was obliged to make peace. The Treaty of Gulistan was concluded in 1813/1228 with British mediation. According to the peace treaty, the status quo was to be kept, which meant that Iran lost the khanates of Derbent, Baku, Shaki, and Karabagh, as well as all claims to Georgia; however, the frontiers were not marked clearly. By this treaty, Iran also lost the right to keep a naval fleet on the Caspian. It was further provided that upon the shah's death, the tsar would support the heir apparent designated by the shah as the crown prince.

The Treaty of Gulistan not only gave the Russians the possibility of future interference in Iran by not delineating the borders clearly, it also sowed the seeds of future conflict. As a result of this long war, Iran was weakened, and the province of Azerbaijan, which had carried the heaviest burden of the war, now lost a considerable amount of revenue as well as territory. The unavoidable tax increase made the government quite unpopular. The uneasy peace lasted thirteen years. Fath Ali Shah accepted the peace treaty with great reluctance, hoping that later he could, with British mediation, change some of its clauses. But this was not to be, and each of the Russians envoys sent to Iran henceforth let it be known there would be no concessions. The shah, on the other hand, was not to be dissuaded.

As the fortunes of war and diplomacy changed, Iran's relationship with Britain too underwent certain changes. According to the Preliminary Treaty that Britain concluded in haste just as the French envoy left Tehran, Britain agreed to send arms and ammunition if Iran were attacked by a European power and to pay Iran annually the sum of 120,000 tomans while the war with France lasted. But this sum was not paid, and in 1809/1224 the shah dispatched the foreign minister, Mirza Abol Hasan Khan Shirazi, to London to present Iran's claims and also ask for British backing in her negotiations with the Russians for the return of the lost territories.

The embassy was a success. Although the British government did not mediate with the Russians as the shah had hoped, it renewed the promise of sending thirty officers. The new envoy was Sir Gore Ouseley, who accompanied Mirza Abol Hasan to Iran. Upon reaching Tehran in the spring of 1812/1227, negotiations for a definite treaty were undertaken. The second clause reiterated that if Iran were attacked by a European power and asked for British assistance, the government of India would

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send troops or 200,000 tomans on condition that the sum would be spent for military purposes under the supervision of the British envoy. The sum of 600,000 due since the Preliminary Treaty was also to be paid now, in addition to twenty guns and 30,000 rifles.

A year after the final defeat of Iran in 1814/1229, the British renewed their treaty with Iran by replacing it with the Treaty of Tehran to meet the changes in the fortunes of war. One of the clauses that was to have later repercussions stipulated that the British would help Iran either financially or materially if it were not the aggressor in a war.

The war with Russia made Abbas Mirza aware of European military superiority, and he made great efforts to reform and modernize the army, as was being attempted in Turkey and Egypt as well. The Iranians first turned to France and then to Britain for aid, and while peace lasted these efforts were continued, and numbers of foreign instructors were employed to train the army. Abbas Mirza also sought to take advantage of European superior scientific advancement; in 1811/1226 he sent two and in 1815/1231 five students to Britain to study painting, medicine, chemistry, gun making, and science. Among them was Mirza Saleh, who wrote memoirs in which he describes in detail how the British government functioned and discussed the freedom enjoyed by the British people. Mirza Saleh studied languages, and later acted as a translator. He also learned printing and brought with him a printing press, and upon his return in 1819/1235 he began to publish a newspaper, the first one in Iran. However, this enterprise was not destined to last long. A move to have a number of books, mostly on military matters, translated into Farsi also was begun during the prince's lifetime.

In the meantime, Iran's relationship with Ottoman Turkey deteriorated. War broke out in 1821/1231 and lasted two years. Iran was victorious, but in the Treaty of Erzerum, Turkey ceded no territory and the borders were unchanged. The main preoccupation of the government, however, was with Russia.

The reasons for the renewal of the war were many. Abbas Mirza wished to renew the war in the hope of undoing the humiliating defeat he had suffered, which had weakened him in the eyes of his rivals for the crown. The Russians in the meantime had taken advantage of the war between Iran and Turkey to invade further territories. The death of Alexander I and the accession of Nicholas I in 1826/1241 did not improve matters. Russian hegemony in the newly conquered lands and the replacement of the ruling class with Russian officials occasioned much resentment. This was worst among the Muslim populations, who it seems were badly treated and appealed to Iran for protection. The shah, however, was opposed to the renewal of the war and still hoped that he could gain some of the lost territories by negotiation.

The Second Russo-Persian War began with Iran's attack on Lankaran and Talysh in the summer of 1826/1241. Everywhere in the Caucasus, the Muslims rose against the Russians, and with their assistance Iran quickly took back all the territories Russia had won by the Treaty of Gulistan. At this time, Abbas Mirza hoped for a cease-fire and did not follow up his conquest, losing the initiative to the Russians. Fath Ali Shah made the mistake of splitting up the command. Half the Iranian forces were put under the command of Allahyar Khan Asef al-Dowleh, who did not

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cooperate with the prince. In the spring of 1827/1242, the new Russian commander General Ivan Paskevitch besieged Yerevan (Iravan). Abbas Mirza, short of funds, made some progress, but by the autumn Yerevan fell to the Russians, who crossed the Aras and marched on Tabriz, taking the capital of Azerbaijan and the crown prince's seat of government.

With the fall of Tabriz, Abbas Mirza was obliged to surrender. The Russian conditions for a cease-fire were the surrender of all the territories north of the Aras and the payment of ten *korur* in gold (equivalent to five million tomans) or twenty million silver rubles. Fath Ali Shah wanted to refuse but was dissuaded by the British envoy, Sir John Macdonald, who offered to act as mediator. The peace talks were held in the village of Turkmanchai, which gave its name to the treaty negotiated there at the end of January 1828/1244. The Russian envoy was General Paskevitch, the British were represented by Sir John McNeil, and Abbas Mirza was assisted by his minister Qa'em Maqam and the Iranian foreign minister Mirza Abol Hasan Khan.

The Treaty of Turkmanchai, drawn in sixteen clauses, replaced that of Gulistan. By this treaty, Iran ceded to Russia all the territories north of the Aras, the so-called "seventeen cities of the Caucasus." The clause about navigation on the Caspian was not changed, and this inland sea became in all but name a Russian lake. The tsar recognized Abbas Mirza as heir apparent, and the crown was to go to his descendants after him. The Russians further obtained the right to establish consulates anywhere in the kingdom. The procedures and protocol for the reception of ambassadors, which had been the cause of much dispute, were fixed. The tariff on trade, exports to and imports from Russia, and all Russian goods was fixed at 5 percent. Russian citizens in Iran were to enjoy extraterritorial privileges and would be under the jurisdiction of the Russian consuls in case of dispute. This right, known as capitulation, was later extended to all European citizens in Iran. The Russians accepted that the indemnity should be paid in installments. There were further clauses about the exchange of prisoners of war and the status of refugees.

The Iranians maintained that the Russians had started the war, and claimed that Britain should pay the promised sum agreed to by the treaty. However, the British argued that the Iranians were the aggressors and refused to pay. Eventually they agreed to pay 200,000 tomans and in exchange to cancel articles 3 and 4 of the Definitive Treaty, which promised British aid in case of war. The shah, in need of cash to pay the indemnity, accepted, as this was one of the conditions for the evacuation of Azerbaijan.

The immediate aftermath of the war and Iran's humiliating defeat was the assassination of the Russian envoy Alexander Griboedov, who arrived a few months later. Griboedov, a well-known Russian literary figure and a relative of General Paskevitch, was received with great pomp, but his aggressive behavior soon alienated people. He was particularly insistent on having two women from Georgia who were married to Muslims returned to their country, and forced entry into the house of Asef al-Dowleh to take custody of the women. This caused anger and religious fury; a mob marched on the Russian residence and put everyone, including Griboedov, to death except the first secretary of the embassy.

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Fath Ali Shah was terrified and expected the worst. After much consideration, one of the sons of Abbas Mirza, Khosrow Mirza, together with a large entourage bearing many gifts was sent to St. Petersburg in 1829/1244 to express the shah's regrets and apologies to the tsar. Among the prince's retinue was Mirza Taqi Khan Farahani, of whom we shall speak later. The tsar, faced with an uprising among his Caucasian subjects and at war with Ottoman Turkey, received the delegation graciously, no amends were demanded, and he remitted the last installment of the indemnity still due.

One of the secretaries of the prince, Mostafa Khan Afshar, has left an account of this embassy and described the factories and hospitals and military schools they visited, which would suggest the curiosity aroused in the Iranians by developments in the West.

Iran's relationship with Russia was fixed by the treaty of Turkmanchai, but the relationship with Britain was unresolved and the cause of future conflict. Britain resented the fact that Iran refused to grant it the commercial and consular privileges Russia enjoyed. The British envoys took an unfriendly attitude towards the Iranians and considered whoever did not adhere to their views and policies as being under the influence of Russia. This assumption was manifested in the reports of the British envoys and was echoed in turn by the historians of the day. On the other hand, the cancellation of the two clauses of the Definitive Treaty made Iran suspicious of British aims, and fearful of a fate similar to India's.

After the defeat in northwestern Iran, the government turned its attention to the east of the country, and Abbas Mirza was given the mission to pacify Sistan, Baluchistan, and Khorasan, which had been in turmoil while the war was going on. However, the main attention of the government was focused on the question of Herat.

After the death of Nader Shah the unity of Afghanistan had gradually fallen apart, and the three states of Kabul, Qandahar (Kandahar), and Herat had each fallen under the government of a different ruler. The weakness of Iran and its involvement in the war with Russia had given these states more freedom, and they refused to pay taxes. Among these, Herat, in the vicinity of Khorasan, was nearest to Iran, with a large Shi'i population of Iranian origin who favored Iran. However, the British, always nervous about the defense of India, considered Herat the gateway to that country and were afraid the privileges Iran granted to Russia would be extended to Herat if it were to fall into Iranian hands. In fact, the British believed the Iranian bid for Herat was due to Russian instigation to compensate Iran for the loss of the Caucasus.

The first attempt by Abbas Mirza together with his son Mohammad Mirza to conquer Herat failed. The second campaign, with Mohammad Mirza as commander, was abandoned when the crown prince, who was on his way to join his son, died in 1833/1249 on the way. Thereupon, Mohammad Mirza abandoned the siege and returned to Tehran. Fath Ali Shah, persuaded by Qa'em Maqam, the late prince's very capable minister, and encouraged by the Russians, who had guaranteed the continuation of the monarchy in the family of Abbas Mirza, recognized Mohammad Mirza as crown prince.

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The death of Abbas Mirza has been rightly considered by historians a disaster for Iran. His plans for reform and modernization were forgotten, or the little effect they had had was soon obliterated. Fath Ali Shah died in 1834/1250 and was succeeded by his grandson.

The Reign of Mohammad Shah (1834–48 CE/1250–64 AH)

Despite the fact that Mohammad Shah was recognized immediately by Britain and Russia and despite the material and financial aid they put at his disposal to reach Tehran, his accession did not go uncontested. Two of his uncles, Zel al-Soltan, governor of Tehran, and Farman Farma in Fars, each claimed the throne, but they were soon defeated, and the young monarch was crowned in Tehran. In all these contests, Mohammad Shah was aided and advised by the experienced Abol Qasem Qa'em Maqam, who had been his father's minister. Two of the shah's younger brothers, Khosrow Mirza, who had been the emissary to Russia upon the death of Griboedov, and Jahangir Mirza, were suspected of plotting against the shah and were blinded and incarcerated in Ardabil by order of the minister. However, Qa'em Maqam did not enjoy his ascendancy for long; the shah was apparently suspicious of the power he held and had him strangled in 1835/1251.

Following the fall of Qa'em Maqam, Haji Mirza Aghasi, the shah's teacher and mentor, became the chief minister, though he did not assume the title of Sadr Azam and always presented himself as a poor mullah. In general, he has been maligned by Iranian and British historians, who represent him as ignorant and fanatical. Haji Mirza Aghasi might have been ignorant or an eccentric, but he was not fanatical, and it was during his rule that foreign missionary schools enjoyed freedom to work and proselytize among the Armenian and Assyrian minorities in northeastern Iran. However, Haji Mirza Aghasi was fiercely opposed to all foreigners, never submitted to Russia, and did not trust the British. The British envoy McNeil wrote of him that he would never sacrifice the interests of his country for any European power. The policy of the shah and Haji Mirza Aghasi vis-à-vis foreign powers seems to have been one of finding a balance between the British and Russia, and to play on their rivalry as the only way to save Iran.

The most important question of the reign of Mohammad Shah was that of Herat, which at this time was ruled by Kamran Mirza and his astute and able minister, Yar Mohammad Khan. Kabul was ruled by Dust Mohammad Khan and Qandahar by Kohandel Khan, who had a family feud with Kamran. Both of these rulers encouraged the shah and expressed their readiness to help him in a campaign against Kamran.

The shah held that Herat had been and still was part of Khorasan, and he was not ready to give up his claim, although on several occasions the British envoy McNeil reminded him that the British would not tolerate an attack on Herat. He

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also believed that clause 9 of the Treaty of Tehran, which stipulated that if war should occur between the Iranians and Afghans the British would not interfere unless asked to by both sides, gave the British no right to do so. The British, however, held the contrary view. The ill treatment of the Shi'i population by the Sunni government of Herat, which instigated a revolt in Sistan as well, also helped convince the shah of the correctness of his decision.

At the end of spring 1838/1254, Mohammad Shah marched on Herat, took the town of Ghurian on the way, and laid siege to the city of Herat. McNeil and the Russian envoy Count Ivan Simonich followed the shah to Herat, as did all the court. The Iranians had no success and the siege dragged on, which gave McNeil the opportunity to put pressure on the Iranians, but with no result. He eventually left the camp with a warning to the Iranians. McNeil went to Mashhad and awaited the decision of his government there. Lord Palmerston, the British foreign minister, supported this action, so McNeil sent Captain Stoddart as emissary to the shah, with the British conditions for the resumption of relations. In the meantime, a force from India landed on Khark Island in the Persian Gulf.

Stoddart found the shah hesitant. The news about Khark was worrying. An attack on Herat had failed, and the help expected from the rulers of Qandahar and Kabul had not materialized, nor had the Russians given any support. In September, the shah lifted the siege and returned to Tehran. He let it be known that he intended to take Herat at a later date, but this was his last attempt and he did not follow up his declaration.

Sometime before leaving Herat, the shah had sent an envoy, Mirza Hosein Khan Nezam al-Dowleh Ajudanbashi, to Europe to explain his policy and seek the mediation of one of the European powers. Ajudanbashi first went to Austria, then to France, but found no support, as Palmerston would not accept their mediation. So he went to London, where he was received by Palmerston but had no success. He was told that McNeil had acted according to his instructions, and that the Iranian government was obliged to accept the terms offered. According to these terms Haji Mirza Aghasi had to make a formal apology to McNeil, the person accused of disrespect towards the British messenger was to be dismissed, and the shah had to write officially that those Iranians in the service of the British could enjoy British protection, to evacuate Ghurian, and to negotiate a commercial treaty. An account of the journey of Ajudanbashi was written by his secretary and gives interesting insight into this embassy.

McNeil made a triumphant return to Iran, Haji Mirza Aghasi formally apologized, and the treaty of peace was signed in October 1841/1257. According to this treaty, the commercial privileges accorded to Russia were granted to Britain too, British goods would pay 5 percent tariff, and British subjects and those who were under British protection were placed under the jurisdiction of the British consul. It was further agreed that besides the residence in Bushehr, the British could open a consulate in Tabriz. In this respect, they were still behind the Russians, who enjoyed the privilege of being able to open consulates anywhere in Iran. The British were far from being satisfied with their relationship with Iran, and they continued to behave

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in an aggressive manner, especially by giving protection to undesirable individuals, which both wounded Iranian pride.

The reign of Mohammad Shah was far from peaceful. In the spring of 1841, Agha Khan Mahalati, the Isma'ili leader, rebelled in Kerman and was defeated, an event that has been attributed to British intrigues and that left a feeling of vulnerability. In 1839/1255 the Pasha of Baghdad attacked and sacked Mohammerah (now Khorramshahr), the port city at the head of the Persian Gulf. He followed this up with an attack on the frontiers of Azerbaijan. As the situation deteriorated, the British and Russians offered to mediate, and a commission including the representatives of the four nations met at Erzurum. The representative of Iran was Mirza Taqi Khan Farahani, now promoted to Amir Nezam. This treaty, which was named the second Treaty of Erzurum, was signed on May 31, 1847/1263. According to it, the frontier between Iran and Ottoman Turkey was partially fixed, the right of navigation on the Shat al-Arab for the two nations was recognized, and the Turks agreed to protect the Shi'i population in Iraq, which were mostly either Iranians or of Iranian decent.

An important event that occurred during Mohammad Shah's reign, and one that was to have far-reaching effects, was the appearance of a heresy in the form of a new religion in Shiraz. The founder was Seyed Ali Mohammad, who declared he was the Bab ("door"), and could announce the coming of the Twelfth Imam. He denied earlier teachings and claimed his new teaching was to enlighten people and achieve world unity. He was particularly critical of the ulema. The movement spread to other cities, especially among enlightened people and the middle classes. The established religious body considered him to be deviating from orthodox theology and had him imprisoned. In 1848/1264 he was tried by a religious body presided over by Naser al-Din, the young crown prince. The Bab was found to be a heretic and was imprisoned with some of his followers. The Babis declared their secession from Islam, becoming militant in spirit. The Bab was executed by order of Amir Kabir in 1849/1266.

Mohammad Shah, who had long suffered from gout, died in September 1848/1264. During most of the fourteen years of his reign, he had been engaged in a struggle with Britain. He was succeeded by his seventeen-year-old son Naser al-Din Mirza.

The Reign of Naser al-Din Shah (1848–96 CE/1264–1313 AH)

At his accession, Naser al-Din was seventeen, but he had at his side the help and guidance of Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Nezam, now Amir Kabir, who served him as Sadr Azam. Between the young monarch and the experienced minister there was a

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bond of friendship and trust to the extent that the shah gave his sister in marriage to Amir Kabir, despite the latter's modest origins.

The amir was raised at the court in Tabriz and as a youth had witnessed Abbas Mirza's attempts to modernize and reform the army. He had also traveled to Russia and Turkey and had gained a larger vision of world affairs than most of his contemporaries. He now took the opportunity to put into effect some necessary reforms to modernize, develop, and strengthen the state. He proceeded to reform the financial system by liming government spending, including salary payments. He also reformed the military system by commissioning foreign officers who undertook a reorganization of the armed forces and by importing arm factories. His most lasting reform was the establishment of the Dar ul-Fonun school, modeled after European colleges, which continued to enjoy royal favor even after his own early demise.

The foreign policy of the amir was based on keeping a balance between Britain and Russia. Where the unresolved question of Herat was concerned, he came to an understanding with the British minister that he would not meddle there as long as the British, too, kept out. This seemed to work well, and there was no problem from that quarter. In 1850, he founded permanent legations in London, St. Petersburg, and Istanbul, and consulates in Bombay and Tiflis (Tbilisi).

The assassination of Amir Kabir, the reforming minister, in January 1852/1268 has remained a dark spot on the character of Naser al-Din Shah and his government. Because of court intrigues in which both the British and Russian ministers played dubious parts, and apparently encouraged by the queen mother, whose influence with her son had been replaced by that of the amir, the young, inexperienced shah became suspicious that the amir wanted to replace him with his younger brother. He first demoted the amir, then exiled him to Kashan. A little later an emissary was sent to put him to death by opening his veins.

Upon the death of the Amir, Mirza Agha Khan Nuri Etemad al-Saltaneh, one of the influential courtiers who may have had a hand in the fall of the late minister, became Sadr Azam. He had none of the vision of his predecessor, and many of the undertakings of the amir fell into disuse. Mirza Agha Khan was a British protégé and had been of use to them, but now he had to renounce his allegiance to become premier, which turned them against him.

Most of Mirza Agha Khan's premiership was spent juggling issues of foreign policy, mainly influenced by British-Russian relations in the wake of the Crimean War. Disagreements with British ambassador Charles Murray, overtures by French Emperor Napoleon III (Louis-Napoléon), and the continued interest of Iran in the affairs of Herat were all factors that had to be dealt with. A second foiled attempt at conquering Herat in 1856 led to the Treaty of Paris in 1857 and gave the British the same privileges as the Russians.

Upon dismissing Mirza Agha Khan in 1858/1275, the shah did not revive the post of premier for about twenty years. Instead, in 1858/1274 he established a six-man cabinet, the ministers of which were to consult on matters of importance and present their findings to him. A little later in the same year he organized a privy council, not unlike what was suggested by European educated reformists such as Mirza

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The concession granted to Reuter was discussed in London and signed just before the shah left for Europe. By this concession, Iran granted for seventy years the monopoly of building railways, tramways, irrigation, roads, the foundation of a bank, and the exploitation of forests and mines (except gold and silver mines). The criticism of the concession, and especially the opposition of the Russians, who demanded similar concessions, had brought home to the shah and Mirza Hosein Khan the impossibility of implementing it. To annul it, Mirza Hosein Khan fell back on a clause that gave the Iranian government the right to cancel it if work had not started within fifteen months. Reuter had only managed to build fifteen miles of railway, so the concession was duly canceled. Reuter, who was not backed up by the British government, could do nothing, although he kept his claim alive, and twenty-seven years later the Iranian government accepted his opening a bank in Iran and Reuter agreed to give up his other claims. The immediate result of the Reuter Concession was to inaugurate an age of concession hunting and rivalry between Britain and Russia.

After the fall of Mirza Hosein Khan as premier, during the next ten years the shah experimented with various types of government and reshuffled the ministers several times without, however, finding a workable solution. After a few more unsuccessful attempts at reorganizing the central government, the shah was ready to name a premier in the person of Mirza Ali Asghar Khan Amin al-Soltan in 1885/1303. Contrary to Mirza Hosein Khan, who had a vision of reform and modernization, Amin al-Soltan acted in the old manner of a vizier completely devoted to his sovereign and ready to let things drift. Gradually, he gathered more power in his own hands and eliminated rivals, and the shah, who had lost interest in reform as he grew older, was happy to let him govern the country.

A great part of Qajar foreign policy in the next decade consisted of giving various monopolistic concessions to Russian, English, and French commercial interests in exchange for military training and financial assistance. Some of these, such as the establishment of the Russian-backed Cossack Brigade, were granted during Naser al-Din Shah's second European trip in 1879. A third trip in 1889 gave a lottery concession to a British businessman, negotiated by the British minister Sir Drummond Wolff, while Reuter's renewed claims finally forced the Iranian government to allow the establishment of a bank.

Other concessions on exclusive use of rivers and the right to navigate the Caspian Sea angered the Iranian public, which viewed this as a slow selling of the country to the Europeans. Reformers like Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi (al-Afghani) formed opposition groups, commonly residing outside Iran, that published stinging pieces against the government policies. The biggest controversy arose out of the Tobacco Concession, which almost wrecked the Qajar power.

Besides the lottery concession, Wolff had obtained for one of his acquaintances, Major Gerald Talbot, the monopoly on the sale, purchase, export, and preparation of tobacco for fifty years, a concession called the Tobacco Régie. Talbot's company would pay £15,000 a year to the government and 25 percent of the net profit. The scope of this concession encompassed the whole of Iran, whereas the Russians considered the north to be exclusively their domain, so they were not

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long in objecting to it. The concession was detrimental to the interests of the merchants of tobacco, the growers, the sellers, and the consumers, who feared an increase in price. The first group to take the lead in opposing the monopoly was the ulema, who feared that with the influx of more Europeans, the Iranians would become westernized and therefore less religious. However, it was the merchants who began to demonstrate and to close the bazaars. Their cause was taken up by the intellectuals like Malkam Khan, who in his pamphlet *Qanun* and the newspaper *Akhtar* criticized the concession. The disturbances alarmed the shah, who soon began to talk about canceling it.

One of the great religious leaders living in Najaf was Mirza-ye Shirazi, who issued a fatwa instructing Iranians to boycott tobacco. It has been said that he wrote this on Sayyid Jamal al-Din's suggestion; it has also been said that it was a fraud. Whatever the truth, the effect was immediate and of great consequence. Almost everyone stopped smoking, and even the women in the shah's harem were said to have broken their water pipes.

The concession was cancelled, but the company, with the backing of the British government, claimed compensations, and this time the shah could not forgo payment as with the Reuter Concession. After attempts to bargain, the Imperial Bank offered to take a loan of £500,000 at 6 percent interest for the duration of forty years. The guarantee of this loan, the first foreign loan the Iranian government took, was the income from the ports on the Persian Gulf. The Russians were not long in taking advantage of the situation. They obtained from the Iranian government the right to found a lending bank, the Banque d'Escompte. It was empowered to accept houses and land as guarantee of its loans, it was exempt from taxation, and it would pay 10 percent of its net profit to the government.

The last years of Naser al-Din Shah's reign were a time of repression, insurgency, and disorder. The shah had grown old and indifferent, his sons and ministers undermined the affairs of state with their rivalry, and government officials were more and more venal and corrupt. In April 1896 (Dhu'l-Qadah 1313 in the Islamic calendar), the shah, about to celebrate his fiftieth year on the throne, was shot dead at the Shrine of Shah Abd al-Azim, just to the south of Tehran. The assassin, a Babi, Mirza Reza Kermani, was one of the adherents of Sayyid Jamal al-Din, and it was said this was done at his bidding.

The Reign of Mozaffar al-Din Shah (1896–1906 CE/1313–25 AH)

Mozaffar al-Din Shah was forty-three years old at the time of his accession to the throne. He had not been well liked by his father, who always appointed strong viziers who did not heed the prince much; he was often short of money and had little

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autonomy. He has been described by historians and his contemporaries as sickly, weak, and under the influence of a number of favorites, who after reaching Tehran exploited every opportunity to make a fortune.

One of the first acts of the government was the trial of Mirza Reza, the assassin of the late shah, who was condemned to hang. At the same time, three Babi dissidents who had resided in the Ottoman capital and were sent back to Iran after the assassination of the shah were put to death in Tabriz by order of the crown prince Mohammad Ali Mirza.

The new shah was more lenient than his father had been, or perhaps he was apprehensive of the dissidents and took a milder attitude toward criticism. Police control was lifted, and newspapers published abroad were allowed into Iran. These newspapers were extremely nationalistic and pointed out the many things that needed reform, but their criticism was generally voiced in a mild manner more in the guise of advice. More importantly, permission was granted for the formation of companies and *anjoman*s (societies, assemblies).

During the latter half of Naser al-Din Shah's reign, Iran's connection with the West had grown and caused a deep dissatisfaction among the intellectual class, which wanted quick reform and resented on the one hand the autocracy of the shah and his government and on the other hand Western imperialism. The more traditional middle classes, too, resented the foreign influence and the damage it was doing to Iran's economy. The urban poor were poorer than before, and their standard of living had deteriorated. Mozaffar al-Din Shah hoped that by his liberal policy, dissatisfaction would be abated; however, this gave the opportunity to work against the government, and the *anjoman*s, which were secretly organized, became hotbeds of revolutionary meetings.

In November 1896/1314, the shah dismissed Amin al-Soltan, who was then exiled, and the post was given to Mirza Ali Khan Amin al-Dowleh, a secretary of Naser al-Din Shah and a member of his council. He was a reformer and believed in modernization. He now set out to put into practice some of his ideas. The key to any reform was financial. All the measures, of course, caused great dissatisfaction, and before long plots were afoot to oust him from power in which the Russians had a hand, as did the partisans of Amin al-Soltan.

Even before returning to power, Amin al-Soltan was in touch with the Russians. In fact, after the failure of the tobacco concession he had begun to lean toward them, and the British, engaged in the Boer War in South Africa, were momentarily unable to interfere effectively. The shah dismissed Amin al-Dowleh, and in August 1898/1316 Amin al-Soltan was called upon to take up his post. In January 1900, he negotiated a loan of £2.2 million from the Russians for seventy-five years, at 5 percent.

The loan was very unpopular, since besides giving control of the finances of the country to Russia, most of it was spent by the shah on his first trip to Europe. When he returned, he was once again short of money. Negotiation with the Imperial Bank for a small loan proved fruitless, and the government had to turn to Russia. The second Russian loan, of £1 million, was negotiated in March 1902/1319. The conditions

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were just as hard, for the Russians demanded a new trade agreement, which undid the one negotiated at Turkmanchai. According to the new agreement, the custom duties, which had been fixed at 5 percent, were decreased to 1.5 percent, practically exempting Russian goods from payment of duties.

Unknown to the Russians, in May 1901/1319 the Iranians granted to the British entrepreneur William Knox D'Arcy the right to excavate for oil in Iran, as there were reports of the existence of petroleum in Khuzistan. The five northern provinces, being in the orbit of Russia, were exempted. A new trade agreement was also concluded with the British not unlike the new one concluded with Russia.

The second trip of Mozaffar al-Din Shah in 1902/1320 was still more unpopular, and on his return the shah dismissed Amin al-Soltan, who was widely criticized, and appointed Ayn al-Dowleh, a conservative nobleman and his son-in-law, as premier. However, things did not improve, there were riots in different parts of the country, and in May 1905/1323, when the shah departed on his third trip for medical reasons, the crown prince came to Tehran with the order to contain the riots until the return of the shah.

Nonetheless, widespread dissatisfaction with the Russian control of the economy, mainly through the influence of the Belgian comptroller of customs, Joseph Naus, led to an uprising. Merchants, encouraged and supported by the ulema (religious leaders) in Iran and Najaf, closed the bazaars and staged open rebellions.

The demands formulated at this time were rather simple. They insisted upon the dismissal of the governor of Tehran and of Naus, and upon the formation of an Adalatkhaneh (House of Justice). All the while, pamphlets were secretly published that instigated people to rebel and encouraged the ulema to support the people in the name of Islam and of Iran. In fact, Islam and Iran were often used synonymously by the revolutionaries. The government gave in and promised to grant their demands, whereupon the *basti*s (those who had taken refuge at a sanctuary) returned to Tehran amid great rejoicing. The government, however, did nothing to keep its promise. The issue was taken up by the secret societies, which circulated inflammatory pamphlets, while the ulema used the mosques to preach and to explain in simple language what liberty, imperialism, law, and constitutionalism meant.

In the summer of 1906, demonstrations began, and when the police dispersed the crowd, a young religious student was killed. The next day, a greater number of people began demonstrating, and several were killed by the police. This was the occasion for a larger exodus of the ulema, this time to Qum, a Shi'i holy city 120 kilometers from Tehran. In the meantime, about 12,000 small merchants and shopkeepers took *bast* in the British Legation, and all trade and religious affairs came to a standstill. The demands now included a Majles (parliament). Needless to say, the members of the revolutionary *anjoman*s were active among the *basti*s in the Legation, explaining what a constitution was, what modern reform entailed, and what a Majles would do, and establishing a republic was suggested. Telegrams of support from the provinces, especially from Azerbaijan, Isfahan, and Gilan, where similar movements were beginning, encouraged the *basti*s.

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The shah relented, and on August 5 he issued a *farman*, a prescript, stating that he granted a Majles and that elections should be held. Thereupon the *basti*s returned and the Legation was vacated. The unpopular Sadr Azam (premier), Ayn al-Dowleh, who personified the tyrannical regime, was dismissed, and Mirza Nasrallah Khan Moshir al-Dowleh, who had more liberal views, was appointed to the office. A number of princes and ulema, previous ministers, merchants, and noblemen met to draw up the electoral laws, which were prepared in haste, as the shah was sick and it was decided that they should hold the elections as soon as possible, for the crown prince was unpopular and distrusted.

In order to simplify matters, it was decreed that of the 156 representatives, sixty seats were assigned to Tehran, and five classes of people, the Qajar princes, ulema, aristocrats, merchants, and landowners, were eligible. Interestingly, thirty seats were assigned to different guilds, the *asnaf*. According to the electoral laws, voters had to be Iranian nationals, male, at least twenty-five years old, well known in their constituency, and property owners or taxpayers. Women, criminals, apostates, bankrupts, and government employees were excluded. It was also decreed that as soon as the deputies from Tehran were elected, the Majles could be opened. The elections of Tehran were speedily performed, and the first Majles was opened by Mozaffar al-Din Shah on October 7, 1906/1324.

The first act of the Majles was to prepare the Constitution, the first of its kind in Iranian history. The Majles was to sit for two years, and it had the right to pass laws. It had the sole authority to grant foreign concessions or monopolies, make loans, and oversee the budget. The deputies had judicial immunity during the term of the Majles. A senate was also envisaged with sixty members, of whom the shah had the right to choose thirty. The shah together with the senate had the right to dissolve the Majles, but the senate was never constituted. The duties of the ministers were also enumerated, and they were responsible to the shah, not the Majles. The question of the responsibility of the ministers was soon broached in the Majles, sparked by the unpopular Naus, who had been appointed minister of post and telegraph as well as minister of customs.

The Constitution was drawn up quickly and signed by Mozaffar al-Din Shah five days before his death in February 1907/1325. He was succeeded by his son, Mohammad Ali Shah, who was already in Tehran because of the sickness of his father.

The Reign of Mohammad Ali Shah (1907–09 CE/1325–26 AH)

Mohammad Ali Shah was thirty-five years old and had been brought up by a Russian tutor, a fact that predisposed the Iranian nationalists against him. In fact, Mohammad Ali Shah as crown prince was unpopular especially in Azerbaijan, the

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new group, the other two parties formed a coalition, but the question of war soon divided them.

It should be remembered that in the first Majles, Sheikh Fazlallah had obliged the deputies to insert in the Supplementary Fundamental Laws a clause that stipulated that five religious figures were to be elected by the ulema to oversee that the laws passed were in accordance with Islam. However, the deputies of the third Majles voted against the election of such a body on various grounds, and the Heyat-e Elmiyeh was defeated on this issue. The Heyat-e Elmiyeh also opposed the policy of centralization advocated by the government; it was particularly opposed to the secularization of the ministry of justice, then being debated, in order to keep the dispensation of justice in the hands of the ulema. In fact, the Elmiyeh opposed all European-inspired innovations and modern ideas such as taxing private property and the law imposing military service.

The third Majles lasted only eleven months, and all the while it was overshadowed by the war. When Ahmad Shah opened the Majles in November 1914/1333, he declared Iran's neutrality in the war that had began in Europe. But four months later, Turkey declared war on the side of Germany and Austria against Russia and Britain and France, which immediately involved Iran despite her declaration of neutrality. The Turks called for a jihad, or holy war, and declared that they would invade Iran unless Russia evacuated the north of Iran, something Russia refused. This brought the actual fighting inside Iran, as the Russians and Turks fought in the north and west of the country. The German plan was to pass through Iran, penetrate Afghanistan and India, and instigate uprisings in those countries.

The war complicated an already complicated situation. Despite the fact that the government had officially declared its neutrality, the ideological differences that had divided the parties now dictated which side they took in the war. The moderates were more or less for cooperating with the Allies, while the Democrats, who had the greater influence in the Majles, took the side of the Turks and Germans. Gradually, the British and Russian ministers came to the conclusion that the existence of the Majles was undesirable, for no government that was put into position with their influence survived the criticism of the Democrats.

In November 1916/1335, a Russian force began to march on Tehran. The government asked all the anti-Allies elements, such as deputies, journalists, and other political opponents, to quit the capital and go to Qum, where it was decided the shah would follow. These people, who became known as the Mohajerin ("emigrants"), left, but the young shah was persuaded by some politicians and the Allied ministers not to follow lest he should forfeit his crown. He was assured that if he did not leave, the Russians would not take the capital and would withdraw. The Mohajerin, led by the leader of the Democrats, Soleyman Mirza, and under the influence of the German ambassador, who had joined them in Qum, organized the Committee of National Defense and decided not to return to Tehran, and being threatened by the Russian troops that had followed them, they made their way to Isfahan, further south.

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In Tehran, the government did not gain a respite when the Mohajerin left, as it was confronted by Russo-British pressure, which became even more pronounced; no cabinet could stand up to them, but none was ready to surrender to their demands completely. Therefore cabinets kept coming and going, each refusing to agree with the demands of the Allies, who were confronted with the same kind of procrastination on the part of the next cabinet. Eventually the Allies' offer of financial aid in the shape of a moratorium was accepted, that for the duration of the war they would not ask for the interest on their previous loans but instead would pay the sum of £50,000, as an advance on a loan to be given at the end of the war. Furthermore, the Russians obtained the agreement of the government to increase the Cossack Brigade and to set up a Mixed Financial Commission to supervise the budget of Iran. The British, too, in a move to secure the south, where German activity and propaganda had caused rebellion by the tribes, the most important being the Qashqais, obtained the assent of the Iranian government to organize a force to police Kerman and Fars. It was to be paid and officered by the British and a number of Indians, the recruits being Iranian volunteers. The leadership of the force, which came to be called the South Persia Rifles, or SPR, was bestowed on General Sir Percy Sykes, who had a wide knowledge of the country; had traveled, written about, and worked in Iran as consul; and spoke the language.

In the meantime, the British and Russians began to negotiate the terms of an alliance with the different governments they put in place. But Iranian demands, which were more or less the same regardless of which government they were offered, did not meet the Allies' expectations. Basically, the Iranians wanted a guarantee of their independence and territorial integrity, the cancellation of debts and the 1907 Agreement to which they had been obliged to agree, a monthly subsidy, the evacuation of territories occupied by Russia, a revision of the tariffs, and a revision of the Treaty of Turkmanchai. One unresolved question was the fate of the SPR. The only lever the Allies disposed of was the payment of the subsidy, without which no government could survive. This situation was radically changed by the Bolshevik Revolution, which occurred as the British were moving into Baghdad.

This event undid all the plans Britain had formed up to that time, for the Russians were temporarily out of the picture. The Bolshevik Revolution also had several repercussions in Iran. On the one hand, it strengthened the Democrats, who had been weakened since the Mohajerat ("migration") but now began reforming their organization and demanding the opening of the Majles. On the other hand, with the disappearance of the Russians, whose forces disintegrated and gradually left Iran, the danger of partition was removed and the press began to criticize British policy in Iran more freely. A committee calling itself the Mojazat (committee of punishment) assassinated a number of pro-British supporters. By late 1917/1336, Bolshevik agents began infiltrating northern Iran, and a serious uprising of the populist Jangalis ("forest dwellers") in Gilan threatened Tehran. The Jangalis were a semi-leftist group, led by the former seminary student, Mirza Yunes "Kuchek Khan" Jangali, who had taken up armed resistance against the government. They

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later went as far as declaring an independent Jangal Republic in Gilan, before being defeated by the new Pahlavi king.

Britain, left as the only great power on the scene, began to reformulate its policy. The architect of this new approach was Lord Curzon, who had been governor general of India and had traveled and written about Iran and knew the country well. Now, as the head of the Persia Committee, it fell to him to formulate the policy with regard to Iran.

Sometime before the Armistice in November 1918/1337, the Iranian government formulated its desiderata, which included representation at the Peace Conference on the grounds that although Iran had been a neutral country, it had been a theater of war and expected compensation for the damages suffered. But the British were determined to exclude Iran from the Conference, and when Ahmad Shah selected Moshaver al-Molk to proceed to the Peace Conference in Paris, Curzon as deputy foreign minister decided that Iran would not be admitted lest she should appeal to an international body for a readjustment of her position.

Prime Minister Vosuq al-Dowleh and two other ministers, Nosrat al-Dowleh and Sarem al-Dowleh, began discussing with the British minister, Sir Percy Sykes, the terms of an alliance. The result was the controversial Anglo-Persian Agreement, which was signed on August 9, 1919/1337. During the course of the negotiations, the ministers demanded the sum of £300,000 to persuade the press to support the Agreement, which they expected to be unpopular. After some wrangling, the sum of £130,000 was actually paid as an installment on the loan to be made, although Curzon considered it a bribe.

According to this Agreement, the British government would supply at the cost of the Iranian government expert advisers for the administration, as well as British officers and ammunition as judged necessary to organize a uniform force. It would also advance a loan to provide for the above undertaking and the financing of reform on the security of the customs. It was also reiterated that discussions would begin for the building of a railway and a commission would be set up to examine the customs tariffs. Two letters were also exchanged; the first defined the conditions of a loan of £2 million at 7 percent redeemable in twenty years, while in the second the British promised to cooperate in order to secure a revision of the treaties, compensation for war damages, and a rectification of frontiers. The fact that these two items were not included in the actual Agreement led to difficulties later.

Upon landing in Anzali, the Soviets made contact with the Jangalis. These were rebels lead by Mirza Koochak Khan, a religious figure and a nationalist who opposed Vosuq and threatened Tehran from 1917 to 1919, but had faded away for a time because of internal dissent. Now the Jangalis reemerged and took Rasht, the capital of Gilan, where they were joined by the Soviets. Together they again posed a threat to Tehran. At this juncture, the Cossack Brigade—which, it should be remembered, had been paid by Britain since the Russian Revolution—came on the scene. In October, General Edmund Ironside arrived in Iran to take command of the British force and organize its withdrawal. He persuaded the shah to dismiss Vsevolod Staroselski, commander of the Brigade; the prime minister, who

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Ahmad Shah returned a year after going abroad and was welcomed warmly as he made his way north. By then, the life of the fourth Majles was coming to an end; it was imperative that elections begin before the Majles closed, but the decision was delayed and the Majles closed on June 1, 1923/1341. The fifth Majles met eight months later. In most constituencies, Sardar Sepah was elected with an astonishing majority of the votes, which was obviously due to the interference of the army. However, he did not take his seat, as on October 23, 1923/1342, he practically coerced the shah to appoint him prime minister. Thereupon, Ahmad Shah left for a third trip to Europe, from which he never returned.

In January 1924/1342, a movement began to establish a republic. Sardar Sepah at first adhered to it, but when the ulema began to oppose it out of fear that a republic would weaken religion, he astutely decided against it. The defeat of the republican movement gave Ahmad Shah, who had not renounced his throne, some hope. A half-hearted attempt was made to replace him with his brother Mohammad Hasan Mirza, the crown prince, but this was aborted because Sardar Sepah was too strong for it to succeed. Pamphlets attacking the shah and his government and asking for an end to the Qajar dynasty were now widely distributed. Telegrams were sent from the provinces, and gradually, demonstrations were organized asking for the shah to abdicate.

In February 1925/1343, in a meeting of the Majles, a single motion announced the deposition of the Qajar dynasty, and it was decided that the government would be entrusted provisionally to Sardar Sepah, now called Reza Shah Pahlavi. Elections would be held for a Constituent Assembly to change the clauses of the Supplementary Fundamental Laws, which bestowed the monarchy on the Qajar dynasty.

The Qajars have been blamed for much that took place. They were particularly criticized during the Pahlavi period; in fact, it was politically incorrect to defend them. However, since the Islamic Revolution, great numbers of documents, official and private, have come to light and many diaries have been published, and modern research has opened new perspectives that in time will no doubt lead to a revision of this very controversial period of Iran's long and tortuous history.

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CHAPTER 15

THE PAHLAVI ERA
IRANIAN MODERNITY IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

AFSHIN MATIN-ASGARI

From Reza Khan to Reza Shah: The Historical Background (1906–26)

Building on significant nineteenth-century transformations, the modern Iranian nation-state came into being under Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925–41). Iran had been a patrimonial kingdom ruled by the Qajar dynasty of shahs, who claimed to exercise absolute sovereignty by right of conquest. In reality, virtually autonomous tribal chieftains, big landlords and merchants, and powerful clerics dominated the lives of ethnically and linguistically diverse populations. Moreover, during the nineteenth century, Qajar Iran had gradually acquired a semicolonial status, being effectively divided into political and economic zones of domination by imperial Russia and Great Britain. The two imperial powers sanctioned each new shah's accession to the throne, provided him with critical loans, obtained economic concessions, and controlled major trade, banking, telephone, and telegraph systems, as well as Iran's most efficient military forces.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, a few decades of Qajar modernizing reforms, as well as protonationalist agitation by a small intelligentsia with a modern education, culminated in the granting of the 1906 constitution. Affected by contemporary revolutions in the neighboring Russian and Ottoman empires, Iran's constitutional movement turned revolutionary too, deposing a despotic shah in a successful civil war. The popular mobilization of 1908–11 radicalized the constitutional movement, adding

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democratic and even socialist ideas to its agenda. In the second Majles, the Democrat Party proposed a progressive reform program including land distribution, labor laws, separation of religion and the state, and the enfranchisement of women. Though vehemently opposed by the conservative establishment within and outside the constitutionalist camp, these demands remained at the core of twentieth-century Iran's reform movements. The constitutional era was the harbinger of political modernity. It introduced modern political parties (both leftist and conservative), modern journalism, and political propaganda through artistic and literary production.

By 1911, however, the occupation of northern Iran by tsarist armies ended effective constitutional government, halting its potential for growing more broadly national and popular. Then, during World War I, the entire constitutional experiment was suspended as British and Russian occupation forces put an end to the country's independence. Moreover, the occupying armies requisitioned food and other vital resources, causing enormous economic devastation, famine, and millions of deaths. The damage, both material and political, inflicted by this massive foreign intervention has yet to be fully investigated by historians of modern Iran.

In 1917, the collapse of Russia's tsarist regime freed northern Iran, where a number of nationalist movements immediately emerged to challenge Britain's control of the Tehran regime. Significantly weakened by the war, the British tried to consolidate their hold by imposing the notorious 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement, which would have turned Iran into a virtual protectorate. The failure of this attempt, due to growing nationalist resistance, made it clear that Britain could no longer maintain its imperial presence directly. Meanwhile, the ongoing Anglo-Soviet war had spilled over into Iran's northern Gilan province, where Red Army detachments joined local anti-British rebels to declare a socialist republic. For a moment it seemed possible for Gilan rebels to capture Tehran, overthrow the Qajars, and install a revolutionary, even Soviet-style, regime. Soviet-backed rebels had routed the Cossack Brigade, and only the British military presence prevented their march on the capital. Once again, foreign intervention proved decisive in shaping the fate of modern Iran.

During 1921, however, the chaotic tug of war between British forces, the Red Army, and Iranian nationalists was finally settled. The 1921 Anglo-Soviet accord ended superpower clashes in Asia, making Iran a buffer zone between the Soviet Union and England's colonial holdings in India and the Middle East. Great Britain's new imperial strategy now favored a centralized Iranian state that could impose order, ensure continued British access to the country's oil, and keep the Soviets at bay. This new global context was the background to the establishment of a modern Iranian nation-state, coinciding with the rise of an obscure soldier of fortune by the name of Reza Khan. All accounts agree that the February 1921 army coup that launched Reza Khan's political career was instigated by British diplomatic and military personnel stationed in Iran. However, Reza Khan's own initiative enabled him subsequently to rise above the ranks of numerous "British agents" to assume the mantle of a national leader.

Up to this point, direct Russo-British intervention had blocked the formation of an Iranian nation-state, something that now had to be built from the ground up.

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The final push came in 1925. Fairly secure in the Majles, Reza Khan muzzled the press and pacified the capital's streets through the open use of violence and terror. He found excuses to bypass the Majles by imposing martial law, which remained in effect until the change of dynasty in early 1926. Under such conditions, and following a countrywide campaign of anti-Qajar agitation, on October 31, 1925, the Majles voted the abolition of the Qajar dynasty, transferring power to a provisional government with Reza Khan at its head. On December 12, a constituent assembly was elected to vote on the establishment of the new Pahlavi dynasty. Of the 260 deputies to this assembly, only three abstained from voting for the new dynasty. Although martial law was technically lifted during these elections, the military was effectively running them, producing candidates favorable to Reza Khan.

Thus, while Reza Shah's full-blown despotism emerged during the 1930s, the foundations of a modern dictatorship were already in place by the mid-1920s. This was not the product of an extraordinary individual's whim, or the repetition of some perennial pattern of "Iranian despotism." Rather, the Pahlavi state grew out of a conservative modernist drift among Iran's postwar political elite, anchored in a particular social base, within a global context sustained by Great Britain's imperial hegemony.

Reza Shah's New Iran: Founding a Modern Nation-State (1926–41)

Some scholars have characterized Pahlavi Iran as "pseudo-modernist," conforming to a presumed pattern of Iranian "arbitrary" rule. Quite the contrary, the Pahlavi "New Order" was a modernist construction, albeit of a conservative and authoritarian variety. Neither did Reza Shah rule like some ancient "Oriental despot." In fact, he never dispensed with a technically functioning constitutional system, nor was his dictatorship hovering "arbitrarily" above political factions and social classes.

While politically modernizing, the Pahlavi state sustained Iran's existing socioeconomic structure and social hierarchies. The economically dominant classes, mainly landlords and a small bourgeoisie, with investment in trade, manufacture, and a few modern industries, seemed content with a semiconstitutional dictatorship. Ultimately, the new regime preserved the social standing and economic privileges of Iran's largest landlords, with the shah having made himself the richest member of this class. From the fifth Majles (1926) to the thirteenth, Reza Shah personally decided the outcome of parliamentary elections. Still, big landlords dominated the Majles, upholding their class interests, rather than being mere puppets to the shah. These men deferred politically to an autocratic monarch who in turn safeguarded the collective interests of the class he had joined.

A new urban middle stratum, encompassing members of the liberal professions, bureaucrats, military men, teachers, and journalists, also benefited from the

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As Reza Shah's rule became more dictatorial, intellectual and cultural production grew more stifled. In literature and the arts, the revolutionary voices of modernists like Taqi Raf'at, Aref Qazvini, and Reza Mirzadeh-Eshqi had been silenced in the 1920s. In historiography, prominent figures such as Abbas Iqbal and Mohammad-Ali Forughi focused on writing state-sponsored textbooks and nationalist tomes paying homage to the glories of the distant past. The most original historian of the 1930s, Ahmad Kasravi (1890–1946), was intensely nationalistic and selectively supportive of Reza Shah's nation-building projects. His "canonical" history of Iran's constitutionalism was written in the 1930s and bears the mark of its time, although with a distinct populist bent that does not fit the dominant mold. Journalists carefully toed the line laid down by state censorship, while the best fiction of the 1930s, for example, the works of Sadeq Hedayat, reflected a dark, depressive, and introspective mood. In 1937, the Organization for the Development of Thought (*Sazman-e parvaresh-e afkar*) was set up to propagate cultural uniformity via the press, school textbooks, radio, music, theater, and public lectures.

In politics, the last vestiges of dissent were rooted out after the 1931 passage of "anticollectivist" laws that allowed the state to imprison individuals deemed "disloyal" to the monarchy and the country. The new repressive legislation was used most famously against the so-called Group of Fifty-three, a loose assortment of leftist intellectuals, civil servants, and university students who formed circles to read and discuss the Marxist magazine *Donya* (the World). The groups' leader, the Berlin-educated professor of chemistry Taqi Arani (1903–39), became an iconic figure of the modern left, a principled intellectual loyal to his ideals and comrades, defiant in captivity all the way to his death. Arani's brave defense in court also set a precedent for a new political genre, whereby the accused turn the tables on state prosecutors, bearing witness to history. The intellectual tendency Arani and his group represented has been claimed by both communists and democratic leftists. In the end, it seems rather to have stood somewhere between the two, more in line with European Marxism after World War I and before the consolidation of Stalinism.

By the late 1930s, the modern Pahlavi police state had cut down more than the last vestiges of democratic and leftist opposition. Reza Shah's paranoid suspicions led to the murderous demise even of men like Abdol-Hosein Teymurtash and Ali-Akbar Davar, key architects of the new regime's political and legal structure. The shah's own demise, however, came in the wake of his drawing close to Hitler's Nazi regime. By the late 1930s, German firms were involved in most of Iran's industrial, mining, and building projects, and Germany had a major role in building the Trans-Iranian Railway. The Nazis' extreme nationalism, antidemocratic and anticommunist bent, and Aryan racial ideology fitted well with Reza Shah's dictatorial temper. Pro-German sympathies also resonated with Iranian nationalists who resented the Anglo-Russian imperial legacy, just as had been the case during World War I. Thus, although fascism as a mass movement never took root in Iran, Reza Shah's pro-Nazi drift became a significant departure, unacceptable to the Allies. Following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the British and Soviet governments demanded the expulsion of all Germans from Iran. Reza Shah's procrastination led

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In contrast, Marxists formed modern Iran's only real political party immediately after Reza Shah's fall in 1941. The success of the Marxist Tudeh (Masses) Party was such that its organizational structure and ideological coherence became a model for groups with diverse ideologies, both secular and Islamist, under the monarchy and the Islamic Republic. The Tudeh Party began as an antifascist coalition dedicated to the cause of Allied victory, constitutionalism, and social reform. Backed by Soviet occupation forces, however, it quickly turned into a full-fledged Stalinist organization. Still, the party's unique success was due mainly to its blending of popular demands with modern organizational skills rather than to Soviet backing and machinations.

The Tudeh was the only party with a comprehensive program of social reform, including labor laws, women's full enfranchisement, and land reform. Moreover, it was the only organization that joined together two modern social classes in a strategic political alliance. On the one hand, the party was linked to a tightly knit trade union movement with tens of thousands of members in Iran's strategic industrial sectors, most notably oil, printing, and textiles. On the other hand, Marxists were remarkably successful at recruiting the country's modern middle-class intelligentsia of teachers, university students, journalists, writers, poets, artists, members of liberal professions, and government employees, including hundreds of junior army officers.

Tudeh Party members played a major role in shaping mid-twentieth-century Iran's political culture, not only through superb propaganda and organizational skills, but also by leading in literary, artistic, and journalistic production. A major influence on modernist culture, for example, was the translation movement dominated by Marxist intellectuals and their "fellow travelers." By the mid-twentieth century, before the age of film and television proper, the first and second generations of Iranians with a modern education formed their perceptions of the world, and of Iran's place in it, primarily by reading translations of foreign fiction. The most popular authors of this period included Victor Hugo, Jack London, Anatole France, Mark Twain, Gustave Flaubert, Charles Dickens, Romain Rolland, Ignazio Silone, Pearl Buck, Nikos Kazantzakis, John Steinbeck, Maxim Gorky, Bertolt Brecht, Anton Chekhov, and Leo Tolstoy. Despite the diversity of genre and theme, the broad worldview of modernist translations focused on nationalism, anti-imperialism, class conflict, and resistance to social and political oppression.

The Allies had agreed to evacuate Iran at the end of the war, but all three major powers used wartime occupation to extend their influence into the postwar period. The British tried to consolidate their control of the oil industry, conservative politicians, and Majles deputies. Their position, however, weakened due to an upsurge in Iranian nationalism, as well as competition from both the United States and the Soviet Union. Americans built their influence by providing financial aid and training to the armed forces and the police. U.S. companies also sought entry into the British-dominated oil industry. Similarly, the Soviet Union used its military presence to obtain postwar political and economic gains. The difference was that while

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the British and the Americans tied themselves to Iran's conservative political and military establishment, the Russians made their influence felt by supporting general popular demands, addressed by the Tudeh Party, and also by backing the grievances of Iran's Azeri and Kurdish minorities.

Thus, as the Anglo-American wartime alliance with the Soviets unraveled in 1944–45, Iran became one of the first theaters of the Cold War. Soviet armies delayed their departure from northern Iran, backing the formation of an autonomous government in Azerbaijan and an independent republic in the Kurdish regions. These Soviet-backed regimes responded to ethnic demands for cultural and linguistic autonomy and, especially in Azerbaijan, initiated education and land reform and gave women the vote. Yet the Soviets soon abandoned their Azeri and Kurdish clients in exchange for political and economic concessions from the Tehran government. Giving in to mounting Anglo-American pressure, the Red Army was withdrawn in 1946. Meanwhile, Moscow had negotiated a deal with Prime Minister Qavam al-Saltaneh to obtain an oil concession in northern Iran. The Iranian military then moved into Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, where the autonomous regimes were crushed and large numbers of their followers massacred. The Soviet Union did not get the oil concession, which was not approved by the Majles.

The opportunistic policy of the Soviet Union during the 1945–46 Azerbaijan and Kurdistan crisis damaged leftist prospects. Nevertheless, the Tudeh Party's popularity and impact continued to grow, even after it became illegal when implicated in a 1947 attempt on the shah's life. This was an indication that the party's popularity was tied directly neither to Soviet influence nor to its legal and above-ground status. By the late 1940s, however, a rival popular movement had appeared around the demand for oil nationalization. British control of Iran's oil industry was highly resented, seen as both a blatant case of economic exploitation and a gross violation of Iran's national sovereignty. The oil nationalization movement peaked during the 1951–53 premiership of Mohammad Mosaddeq, the inspirational leader of the National Front.

The rise and fall of Mosaddeq is generally seen as the crucial turning point where Anglo-American intervention destroyed modern Iran's chances for charting an independent course under a secular nationalist regime. Equating the oil nationalization movement with a fundamental assertion of national sovereignty, Mosaddeq became immensely popular, while arousing great fear and opposition among the British. Acting at the behest of the latter, the shah dismissed Mosaddeq in the summer of 1952. But an outburst of popular protests led to the reinstatement of Mosaddeq who by then symbolized defiance of both the British Empire and Iran's conservative political establishment. As Mosaddeq's confrontation with the British intensified, the United States also turned against him, joining covert operations to destabilize and overthrow his government. At the same time, the National Front began to fall apart, its secular and Islamic right-wing factions joining forces with the Anglo-American project for Mosaddeq's removal.

In mid-August 1953, Mosaddeq was overthrown in a military coup organized by the CIA. The oil crisis had led to a British economic embargo and evacuation

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of Iran; thus the covert British plan for Mosaddeq's overthrow was implemented by the Americans. The United States was already the major foreign influence in the Iranian armed forces, working closely with the shah and Mosaddeq's other domestic opponents. Diplomatic records and memoirs, as well as most academic studies, explain the 1953 coup in terms of American fears of an imminent communist threat in Iran. In fact, the communist threat was used to justify a course of action that laid the foundations for three decades of U.S. political and economic hegemony in Iran.

Had the United States chosen to support Mosaddeq, or at least stay neutral, the National Front rather than the Tudeh Party would have been strengthened. With only several thousand members, including a few hundred junior army officers, the Tudeh Party was hardly poised to come to power. Nor was the global context favorable to a communist takeover in Iran. Dealing with the aftermath of Stalin's death, and aggressively confronted by the Americans in Korea and elsewhere, the Soviet Union was not in a position to risk another major military showdown with the United States by sponsoring a Tudeh Party takeover in Iran.

From the CIA Coup to the Shah-People Revolution (1953–63)

The 1953 coup was a watershed in modern Iranian history. It marked the decisive end of an independent nationalist course, propping up instead an increasingly autocratic Pahlavi monarchy in a close Cold War alliance with the United States. The shah's restoration to the throne by the CIA cast a dark shadow on the legitimacy of his dynasty, while growing U.S. involvement in Iran's military, political, and economic affairs confirmed widespread perceptions of his regime as essentially an American client state. Though the shah was not a mere American "puppet," dependence on the United States damaged his legitimacy, breeding popular resentment and uniting the opposition in a grand anti-American and anti-shah coalition.

Post-1953 U.S.-Iranian relations were complicated and went through several phases. In the first phase, during the 1950s, the shah was not an absolute monarch but presided over an Anglo-American-backed regime that quickly rooted out Mosaddeq's supporters and crushed the Tudeh Party. Too popular to be executed, Mosaddeq was imprisoned and then lived under house arrest until his death in 1967. Thousands of National Front and especially Tudeh Party members were imprisoned, and scores of communist army officers were executed. A massive wave of repression swept the country, hitting particularly the politicized intelligentsia and activist university students.

In December 1953, for example, special commando units raided Tehran University and opened fire on students, killing three and injuring many more. The

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protests were eventually put down with casualties reaching into the hundreds or more. While members of the secular opposition had taken part in the protests, the most active participants came from the lower bazaar strata, who traditionally followed the clergy. In the Islamic Republic, the June 1963 events are depicted as a harbinger of the 1978–79 revolution. In fact, the "1963 uprising" mobilized a more limited social base and lacked revolutionary demands. Like National Front leaders, Khomeini in 1963 asked only for the observance of the constitution and not for the regime's overthrow. It was only after being exiled from Iran that he joined the radical opposition, declaring, by the early 1970s, that monarchy was in principle anti-Islamic. In 1964, however, he was exiled to Turkey, after denouncing the shah for the granting of diplomatic immunity to U.S. personnel stationed in Iran. Soon he went to Iraq, where he remained an important but by no means undisputed opposition leader. Up until the late 1970s, as Khomeini himself often complained, radical opposition to the regime was not predominantly Islamic, nor was it led by the clergy.

The Contradictions of High Pahlavi Modernity (1963–79)

Following the violent suppression of the 1963 protests, the regime banned the last vestiges of legal opposition. The National Front had to suspend its activities, and its more radical leaders and student activists were jailed. Thereafter, the fateful fifteen years between 1963 and the reemergence of open opposition in 1977–78 witnessed the imposition of an increasingly rigid royal autocracy. During this period, the unfolding of the shah's "revolution" marked Iran's decisive transition to a state-directed market economy, spearheaded by oil-based capital formation and tightly controlled by an absolute monarch ruling through a police state thinly disguised as a constitutional monarchy. From a social and economic point of view, the shah's reforms initially appeared successful. A significant number of middle-sized peasant households received land; women's participation in the new urban labor market increased, while new legislation expanded their rights within marriage and family; public education and health and social services expanded rapidly in urban areas. The 1960s and '70s were thus the peak of Pahlavi-style modernity. By material standards, this was an era of growing prosperity, especially as oil income began to multiply in the 1970s, trickling down partially to the urban middle and lower classes. Such benefits accrued despite the massive waste, mismanagement, and graft of the technocratic elite that ran the country under the shah's tight command.

All was not well, however, as a strong undercurrent of political frustration and cultural malaise brewed just under the surface. University campuses were the most active site of chronic unrest, often turning into openly political demonstrations that became increasingly radical from the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. As

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peaceful protests were systematically stifled, university students became the main source of recruitment for a violent campaign of urban guerrilla operations that broke out in the early 1970s. Never more than several hundred strong, the guerillas were a younger generation of mostly self-styled communists who believed their heroic defiance of an oppressive regime would shake the populace out of fear and complacency. In addition to Marxist-Leninists, the guerrilla movement had an important faction, dubbed "Islamic Marxist" by the regime, that mixed 1960s and '70s Third Worldism and anti-imperialism with an innovative interpretation of Shiʿism, emphasizing social egalitarianism and violent resistance to tyranny and political oppression.

The origins of "Islamic Marxism" went back to the 1940s, when a modern Islamist movement took shape mainly in response to the sudden popularity of Marxism, especially on university campuses. In 1944, for example, a group of young activists had formed the Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists. They borrowed wholesale from Marxist political and economic theory, but rejected philosophical materialism. Small but influential circles of Muslim socialists remained active during the 1940s and '50s political struggles. By the 1960s and '70s, some of their second-generation members had formulated a more comprehensive synthesis of Marxism and Islam.

While quite influential during the last Pahlavi decades, Marxism, both secular and Islamic, was only one strain within a broader and more diffuse culture of opposition. During the 1960s and '70s, a powerful discourse of nativism, rejecting the West and celebrating Iranian authenticity, had become increasingly pervasive. The writer Jalal Al-e Ahmad's booklet *Westoxication* (*Gharbzadegi*) was only the most famous articulation of a broadly shared sentiment lamenting Iran's subjugation to the secular technological domination of a morally hollow and predatory West. A lesser-known source for Iran's modernist authenticity discourses was the intellectual circle formed by the French Orientalist Henri Corbin and his Iranian associates. Active in Tehran during the 1960s and '70s, Corbin was at the center of systematic efforts at constructing a modern interpretation of Shiʿism, tying it to Iran's Zoroastrian and "Aryan" past. The Corbin circle linked a metaphysical critique of the West to a modern recasting of Iran's religious and mystical traditions. One of Corbin's closest collaborators was the University of Chicago–trained Seyyed Hossein Nasr, head of Iran's Imperial Academy of Philosophy during the 1970s. A third major figure was Ayatollah Morteza Motahhari, the most prolific and influential interpreter of modernist Shiʿism during the two prerevolutionary decades. Motahhari had been Khomeini's student and remained in touch with his master. Under the monarchy, his liberal-conservative reading of Shiʿi Islam was allowed wide exposure, as it countered both Marxism and various forms of Islamic Marxism, especially the popular brand espoused by Ali Shariʿati.

Beyond books and periodicals, Iran's homegrown anti-Western authenticity discourse gradually reached larger audiences, soon saturating popular culture, in movies, television series, music, and songs. By the 1970s, the regime, too, had succumbed to the authenticity discourse, halfheartedly embracing its anti-Western

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cultural crisis emerged on the horizon in 1976–77. By this time, the economic boom of the 1970s had created massive structural dislocations, with millions flooding into large cities, expecting better urban jobs and higher living standards. Then came the mid-1970s slowdown with unemployment, shortages of housing, social services, electricity, and transportation bottlenecks. Moreover, the rampant corruption and cynicism of the political elite turned the public's raised expectations into anger and frustration.

While facing a set of new domestic problems, the regime also suddenly appeared less secure in its strategic alliance with the United States. From the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, the shah had established particularly close ties with the Nixon administration, buying billions of dollars worth of the most sophisticated American armaments and projecting Iran's military and political presence into the Persian Gulf region as a main pillar of the pro-American status quo. Then came the post-Vietnam American foreign policy crisis, leading to the Carter administration's distancing itself from repressive allies. As president, Carter exempted Iran from the implications of his "human rights" foreign policy. Nevertheless, the shah obviously felt less secure of unconditional American support, while Iran's dissidents, and particularly the liberal opposition, were emboldened to openly criticize political repression.

Thus, beginning in 1977, associations of lawyers, writers, journalists, and artists led a protest movement with secular democratic demands, calling for the restoration of constitutional government. The regime's slow and indecisive response to such demands then paved the way for a deepening political crisis. Arguably, the regime's rapid meltdown would not have been inevitable had the shah acted differently during the early stages of what quickly became his regime's final crisis. In 1977, when ending Prime Minister Hoveyda's long and sycophantic tenure, the shah could have met the liberal opposition's basic demands by relaxing his personal control and restoring constitutional government. Even in early 1978, such a compromise might have prevented a revolutionary escalation and possibly saved the Pahlavi dynasty. Eventually, the shah was forced to embrace this option, but then it was too late, coming just prior to his final departure from Iran in 1979.

In fact, the responses of both the shah and the United States to Iran's escalating late-1970s crisis were indecisive, confused, and counterproductive. As the shah's situation grew more desperate, American policy became more ambiguous and stymied, with Carter's advisors clashing on whether to support the shah or negotiate seriously with the radical opposition. For his part, the shah added to the confusion by making significant concessions, such as releasing political prisoners and allowing more freedom of expression, while refusing ultimate power sharing. These half measures added to the frustration of a restive populace, made angrier by the regime's imposition of martial law and the military's daily shootings of unarmed street protesters.

The point of no return was reached in 1978, when the violent suppression of originally limited street protests caused their escalation into an ever-widening spiral, which by the year's end had engulfed the entire country. It was also in 1978 that the leadership of the opposition passed from secular liberals to a radical coalition

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CHAPTER 16

IRAN AFTER REVOLUTION (1979–2009)

MAZIAR BEHROOZ

The Revolution

The February 1979 revolution in Iran was a surprise to all its participants, both domestic and foreign. The imperial regime of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi fell in little more than one year of street demonstrations, which during the last months of 1978 had expanded to include general national strikes and armed clashes.

By September 1978, the ad hoc coalition that eventually toppled the imperial regime was dominated by those envisioning the establishment of an Islamic state. Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini was the undisputed leader of the opposition by this time. The coalition was unique in that it included almost all social classes and political forces, whether tied to the Islamists or not, with the possible exception of the upper layer of the Iranian bourgeoisie. Indeed, by the end of 1978, the shah had managed to alienate almost all social groups and classes.

The American election in 1976 led to the January 1977 inauguration of Jimmy Carter, a Democrat with strong convictions regarding worldwide human rights. Carter's election seems to have had a profound effect on Iranian politics. The shah, always an active supporter of Republican candidates in American politics, perceived President Nixon's resignation following the Watergate events and President Ford's defeat by Jimmy Carter to be a weakening of American support for his rule.

With issues of human rights becoming increasingly important in American politics, the shah moved to adapt his regime's conduct to the new international realities. This is not to suggest that evidence exists of direct U.S. pressure on the shah. With political power and decision making ever more concentrated in the hand

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successful, and the perceived communist threat, while not eliminated, was contained. Indeed, the revolution was led neither by the armed opposition of the 1970s nor by any Soviet-backed political organization. It was spontaneous in nature and had come under the leadership of radical Islamists led by Grand Ayatollah Khomeini. The imperial regime's paralysis in confronting the revolution was partially linked to the shah's disorientation, loss of will, and inability to comprehend the reality of the revolutionary movement confronting his regime. Finally, a factor which played a role in influencing the shah's state of mind was his battle with leukemia, a secret known to only a few intimates.

The shah's state of paralysis was partially linked to the inability of his traditional foreign backers and friends to understand the situation and to give him the general advice he needed. Here, the Carter administration's confused and contradictory policy toward the shah and revolution played a major role in the imperial regime's demise.

There seem to be three basic reasons for the American failure in Iran. First, as some American policy makers of the time have noted, there was a sharp decline in U.S. intelligence gathering on Iran in late 1970s. This was due to the trust U.S. policymakers put in the shah's leadership and their belief that Iran was stable. Hence, in order not to alienate the shah and believing all was under control, the United States cut back on its intelligence activity in Iran. The lack of adequate intelligence meant that the American policy makers were unable to realize the seriousness of the situation in time and, even more importantly, had very little information on opposition leaders and the way they operated.

Second, American foreign policy was faced with a number of important foreign policy issues in 1978 (SALT II, the Camp David Accords, etc.), which stretched its resources to the limit. This meant that the Iranian situation did not receive due attention from American policy makers until the revolution was well underway.

Third, among top American policy makers in the State Department and National Security Council, there were two different approaches to events in Iran, which translated into sometimes contradictory advice to the shah, adding to his confusion. In general terms, the difference between the two policies was that the NSC emphasized the U.S. and Western interest in Iran, while the State Department was more preoccupied with promoting democracy in Iran. After September 1978, as the turn of events became more critical, the shah began to receive two sets of contradictory signals from the Americans. The problem was compounded when the U.S. ambassador to Tehran began to lose his respect among top Washington policy makers, making it impossible for the U.S. embassy to devise coherent advice for the monarch.

Once it became clear that the shah's rule could not be maintained, the two policies became even more divided. The policy proposed by the NSC held that any government in Iran should enter negotiations with the opposition from a point of strength. Accordingly, the Iranian government was constantly urged to show force, and General Robert E. Huyser was sent to Iran to assure the integrity of the imperial

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Iranian armed forces. This policy expected the armed forces to stage a coup if the civilian government of Shapur Bakhtiar failed. The State Department policy makers, it seems, had more faith in the Bakhtiar government and wanted the armed forces to continue backing it. This policy was based on the premise that compromise with the opposition was inevitable and the imperial armed forces should maintain their integrity so that in the future they could be used as a counterbalance to the new revolutionary government.

The Soviet Union's reaction to the Iranian revolution was no less confusing and was the result of an utter misunderstanding of realities. The emergence of Islam and the Shi'i clergy at the head of a mass revolutionary movement in Iran took the Soviets by surprise. Up to the end of the 1960s, the Soviet scholars saw little or no progressive role for Shi'i Islam in modern times. These scholars, and indeed the Soviet government, viewed the 1963 uprising against the Shah's reform program as regressive. The Soviet perception of Shi'ism began to change in the 1970s as a new generation of Soviet scholars began to analyze the subject. These scholars began to see some positive role for Islam in modern Iranian history.

The 1970s witnessed a mutually beneficial economic relationship between the Soviet Union and the imperial regime, and politically a cordial state of minidetente existed between the two governments. The shah always suspected and mistrusted the Soviet Union's hidden agenda for Iran, and the Soviet Union, while recognizing the shah as an ally of the West, viewed the imperial regime as stable enough to opt for accommodation rather than confrontation. Based on its analysis of Islam and coexistence with the imperial regime, the Soviet policy makers were very slow in acknowledging the existence of the revolutionary movement and its ideological character. An additional reason for this lack of comprehension by the Soviet Union was, as with the Americans, a sharp decline in its intelligence performance in Iran.

Despite several bloody clashes between the Iranian military and the rising revolutionary movement in the first half of 1978, the Soviet Union initially played down the hegemonic Islamist element in the leadership of the revolution and then was slow in understanding the scope of Khomeini's popularity.

The period after the February 1979 downfall of the shah may be divided into five distinct stages. First came a period of consolidation for the emerging new Islamic state led by Khomeini (1979–81); the second stage was one of repression, international isolation, and continuation of a bloody war with Iraq, ending with the death of Khomeini (1981–89); the third stage, identified with the presidency of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, was one of an attempt at institutionalization of the Islamic republic through reconstruction, continued repression albeit on a lesser scale, and an attempt to end Iran's international isolation (1989–97); the fourth, identified with the presidency of Mohammad Khatami, was one of emergence of a reform movement aiming at establishing the rule of law, civil society, and an Islamic democracy (1997–2004). The fifth stage began with the election of populist-conservative Mahmud Ahmadinejad in 2005 and continued through his tenure to 2009.

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Maktabis moved to create their own state institutions and paralegal forces in the society. Hence, the Maktabis soon gained control of the revolutionary council, the revolutionary *komiteh* (security committees), and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. These parallel institutions with increasingly more power than the old institutions helped the Maktabis to oust the Islamic liberals.

This period was one of transition in which the IRI moved from overthrowing the imperial regime through a process of consolidation. The main characteristics of this phase were, on the one hand, a struggle between the IRI and its opposition (secular leftists, nationalists, and leftist Islamists opposed to Khomeini and the clergy-dominated state), and on the other, a factional competition within the IRI's ruling elite, which inevitably involved the opposition as well.

This was a period of relative freedom for the opposition; newspapers were published, political meetings were held in the open, and opposition to the IRI was, for the most part, political. The scale of these political freedoms, however, became more limited as events approached June 1981. Important social and political issues of this phase were the rights of national minorities, the nature of an Islamic state, the rights of women, the American hostage crisis, and the Iran-Iraq War.

The IRI's internal political opposition consisted of a spectrum of groups challenging the new state on a variety of issues local and national, from ethnicity to gender. These groups and organizations included the Marxist left (e.g., Fedayan-e Khalq and the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party), the Islamic anticlerical left (e.g., Mojahedin-e Khalq), and regional ethnic groups (e.g., the Kurdish Democratic Party). Using the relative freedom of expression and organization following the victory of the revolution, these oppositional groups began to organize, publish, and even violently confront the newly emerging state.

One issue that led to friction between the opposition and the IRI leadership was the writing and eventual approval of the new republic's constitution from summer through fall of 1979. The new constitution, which was written while excluding much of the opposition, basically called for and envisioned a theocratic republic dominated by the Shiʿi clergy. In this arrangement, the role of the opposition and the space in which it would be allowed to function remained ambiguous.

The IRI constitution was written by a group of men, almost all supporters of Khomeini, selected in the summer of 1979. The selection process was arranged so that the popular vote would elect a group of vetted candidates to write the Islamic constitution. The document was eventually put to a vote in December 1979, in the middle of the hostage crisis euphoria. The IRI constitution proved to be a contradictory document combining elements of popular and democratic principles and institutions with theocratic rule. For example, while the president and parliament are chosen by popular vote, other unelected bodies oversee them. The president's power is in effect limited by the power of the *rahbar* (leader) or Supreme Ruling Jurist (*vali-ye faqih*), who is selected by a closely vetted but popularly elected body called the Council of Experts. The power of the parliament is limited by a *rahbar*-appointed Council of Guardians, which also vets candidates for all elections. The third branch of the state, the judiciary, is in effect appointed by the *rahbar*.

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could be developed, the IRI began to purge its faculty and student body of undesirable opposition activists.

As 1980 came to a close, it became clear that not only was friction between the IRI leadership and its opposition intensifying, but within the leadership the Islamic liberals, led by President Bani Sadr, and the clerical faction organized in the IRP, were also heading for a collision. The collision came as Bani Sadr allied himself with the opposition radical Mojahedin and the IRP rallied around Khomeini and moved to dismiss Bani Sadr in June 1981. While Bani Sadr's removal was carried out without much difficulty, the Mojahedin unleashed its paramilitary organization in an effort to topple the IRI and secure state power for itself, resulting in a near state of civil war during 1981–83.

The Second Stage (1981–89)

The second stage started with the June 1981 crisis and ended with Khomeini's death in June 1989. In June 1981, the clergy-dominated faction of the IRI, organized in the IRP and supported by Ayatollah Khomeini, pushed the Islamic liberals out of power, declared all oppositional political activities illegal, and moved the country into a period of near civil war with the Muslim Mojahedin and other radical oppositional groups. Important social and political issues of this period were the consolidation of the IRI under the clergy-dominated faction, the effective repression of the opposition political groups and the disintegration of their network and organizations inside Iran, the stalemate and attrition of the Iran-Iraq War, and finally, the reemergence and intensification of another round of factionalism among the ruling elite.

The political freedom that followed the 1979 revolution gave a chance to political organizations and parties, from left to right (with the exception of the promonarchy forces), to organize. After twenty-six years of relatively consistent dictatorship, this newly achieved freedom gave an important breathing space needed by all groups and parties.

Iran's postrevolution problems were many, and mistakes made by the new leadership exacerbated the situation. The confrontation with the United States over the hostages and the war with Iraq compounded the problems. Opposition political groups, depending on their strength and organizational networks, began to challenge the new regime on its shortcomings. Almost immediately after the collapse of the imperial regime, signs of confrontation between the new IRI leadership and the opposition began to show, and as time passed it became clear that the degree of tolerance of the new Islamist leadership was limited and was coming to an end rapidly.

The opposition to the IRI was faced with new revolutionary Islamist leadership unlike any in history. Unlike the victors of other revolutions, the new leaders of Iran looked to the glorious past of the Islamic civilization for inspiration rather than to

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the bright future. While they emphasized the consolidation of their theocratic state, they pursued a cultural revolution rather than changing the relations of production or the ownership of the means of production, let alone creating democratic institutions.

Furthermore, the IRI's foreign policy based on "neither East nor West," regardless of different factional interpretations, meant political independence of the state vis-à-vis international Cold War blocks. Hence, true to its policy, the IRI took on the United States by taking its diplomatic mission hostage in November 1979, and it became an important backer of the Afghan Mojahedin resisting Soviet occupation.

A combination of the above two maneuvers served to confuse and disorient the opposition, making it impossible for it to develop a realistic analysis of the IRI and postrevolution Iran. It also helped prevent the opposition from uniting behind a program of preserving social and political liberties. All of the above made it much easier for the IRI to move against the opposition and the Islamic liberals in the turbulent months of June to December 1981. The suppression of the opposition continued with less intensity through 1984 and was one of the darkest periods of postrevolutionary Iran's history, when thousands of people perished in street clashes, by execution, and in jails.

With the elimination of the opposition and with seeming unity among the leadership of the IRI, the energies of the state and society were devoted to the pursuit of the war with Iraq. A longtime ally of the Soviet Union, the secular regime of Saddam Hussein under the Arab nationalist socialist Baath Party saw in Iran's revolution a threat and an opportunity. The threat came from the reinvigorated Shi'i version of political Islam in Iran, which had just toppled one of the seemingly most stable and powerful states in the Middle East. With a majority Shi'i population of its own, the secular, Sunni Arab–dominated authoritarian regime of Iraq felt threatened by the specter of Iran's revolution spreading to Iraq. The opportunity arose from the fact that, like other postrevolutionary states, Iran was gripped in the chaos and disruption of almost all its state organs, its military included. That the IRI was also engaged in a struggle with the United States over the American hostages, as well as dealing with increasing internal instability due to challenges of the opposition, made Iran a ripe target for invasion in September 1980.

For the IRI, the Iran-Iraq War was essentially a defensive one during 1980–81. This is when large areas of southwestern Iran were occupied by enemy forces while the country was in international isolation due to the hostage problem. But with an end to the hostage crisis in January 1981 and the elimination of the opposition, the IRI went on the offensive, culminating in the May 1982 liberation of Khorramshahr, the only major city occupied by the Iraqis.

In June 1982, the IRI leadership, presided over by Khomeini, made the fateful decision to turn the war into an offensive one by pursuing Iraqi forces into Iraq with the goal of toppling the Baath regime by capturing Baghdad. Although Iran was under a U.S.-led embargo at this point, which made access to modern, especially U.S.-made, weapons difficult, the fact that Iran was much larger than Iraq in terms of territory, resources, and population meant that such a goal was plausible.

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Thus, from 1982 onward, the IRI began to devote all the nation's resources and energies toward its offensive war effort. The war soon intensified and spread to new areas, with the firing of ground-to-ground missiles at cities and the attacking of oil shipping in the Persian Gulf by both sides. Perhaps the lowest point of the war was when Iraq began to use chemical weapons against Iran and its own rebellious population from 1986 onward. The war soon degenerated into a war of attrition, with massive damage to both countries' civilian and military population and infrastructure.

Internally, hope of unifying the leadership and ending factional struggles by eliminating the opposition proved illusive. By the mid-1980s, the coalition of victors within IRP, or the Maktabis, had begun to polarize. Factional fighting became so acute that the IRP was paralyzed and was ordered to disband by Khomeini in May 1987. At first two, and by 1988 three, factions had appeared on the political scene. First, there appeared a left or radical faction gathered around Premier Mir-Hosein Musavi and such old revolutionary hands as Ayatollah Mehdi Karrubi and others, with tacit support from Khomeini. The left faction supported a more idealistic, even populist, notion of an Islamic state where the state was responsible for the welfare of the community. This faction supported strong state interference in regulating the economy and continued state control of key production units and foreign trade as stipulated in the IRI constitution, as well as presence in cultural and political spheres. The left faction's peak of power was when it secured a majority in the third Majles (1988–92).

Another figure associated with the left faction, but one who kept his distance from direct factional conflict, was Grand Ayatollah Hosein Ali Montazeri, a disciple of Khomeini who was selected as his heir apparent in November 1985. By the mid-1980s, Montazeri and his supporters were already in conflict with elements associated with the right faction over the treatment of political prisoners in the prison system. His conflict with the right faction would soon spread to other areas, putting him on a direct collision course with Khomeini.

The right or conservative faction rallied around President Ali Khamenei and included conservative clergy and pro-bazaar figures. To this faction, the role of the state was limited to regulating the political, social, and cultural spheres, but it had to keep its hands off the economic sphere, especially when it came to trade, where the bazaar had interests. The regulating policies of Premier Musavi, a necessity of the war effort, were a regular target of the right faction during the second Majles (1984–88).

The third faction, the pragmatists, began to appear in 1987 and rallied around the speaker of the Majles, Rafsanjani; it included many modern, educated technocrats who, while they did not care much for political freedoms, advocated efficiency and economic growth.

A combination of Iran's factional politics and its gradual successes in the war with Iraq began to change international calculations as to how to deal with Iran's revolution and war aims. The international community was mostly silent when Iran was invaded in 1980 and while Iraq seemed to have the upper hand. Iran, a country

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in revolutionary turmoil, was isolated for taking American diplomats hostage and could find very few friends because of its illegal behavior. Furthermore, its relationship with the Eastern Bloc was also rocky. Iran had condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, was actively supporting the Afghan resistance, and had disbanded the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party in 1983.

The U.S. policy toward Iran and Iraq was one of patiently waiting for the two to weaken each other. The Reagan administration, nevertheless, normalized its diplomatic relations with Iraq and opened its embassy in 1984. In 1986, the United States attempted to open dialogue with Iran on a limited basis. The episode that came to be called the Iran-Contra Affair was an American foreign policy scheme with grand, perhaps unrealistic, goals. The Reagan administration was attempting to create an opening with Iran by offering it badly needed American weapons at inflated rates through Israel, to use the money to support the administration's policy in support of Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries, and to use Iran's good offices to free Western hostages in Lebanon. The whole policy collapsed after members of Montazeri's office found out about it and leaked the news to a Lebanese newspaper, thus creating scandals in both Iran and the United States. In Iran, the venture had the support of Khomeini and the highest level of the IRI leadership. Hence, those who had leaked the news were promptly arrested and executed. This was the beginning of Montazeri's downfall in Iran and the end of America's attempt to open dialogue with the IRI.

In 1987, the Iran-Iraq War escalated and began to involve the United States more directly on the side of Iraq. First, Iran's military operations on the war front began to show success and brought about the specter of a possible Iranian victory. The IRI had been using its superior numbers, more motivated troops, and better commanders to compensate for its lack of weaponry and adequate firepower. Furthermore, Iran had managed to stop Iraqi oil shipments from its Persian Gulf ports, cutting Iraq's income.

Iraq, while still able to export oil through Turkey, compensated by borrowing from Arab countries, buying top-of-the-line weapons from an international community that did not want to see an Iranian victory, and attacking Iranian shipping in the Persian Gulf. Iran retaliated by attacking Kuwaiti shipping (a major backer of Iraq) in the Persian Gulf, triggering Kuwait to ask for protection from the United States. After some hesitation, the Reagan administration agreed to reflag Kuwaiti oil tankers, making any attack on them an attack on the United States.

This escalation of the war put the IRI and the United States on a collision course as violent clashes occurred between Iran and the United States in 1987 and 1988. Furthermore, through loans from the United States and other countries, and with much help from Western companies, Iraq developed an elaborate chemical weapons program and began to use it on Iranian troops. Here, U.S. diplomatic protection ensured that no international pressure would be brought on Iraq.

A combination of the international community's support for Iraq, U.S. pressure on Iran, and Iraqi use of chemical weapons began to turn the tide against the IRI. By spring 1988, the United States was providing Iraq with detailed intelli-

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was a political one, as in 1989 he hardly had the religious credentials for the job. Other constitutional changes included naming the position of the supreme leader as one of "absolute rule of the jurist" rather than plain "rule of the jurist," thus making it even more difficult to question the supreme leader and attempt to limit his power. Another constitutional change lessened the power of the president by removing his responsibility for coordination between the three braches of government and giving it to the supreme leader.

While the IRI was now under the leadership of a middle-ranking cleric, the rise of Grand Ayatollah Hosein Ali Montazeri to the position of grand ayatollah began to compound the problem. As a student of Khomeini and a militant clergyman during the antishah struggle, Montazeri was an enthusiastic supporter of the revolution, a key author of its constitution, and Khomeini's heir apparent from 1985 to 1989. Montazeri became a victim of factionalism, and his fall from grace was initiated by Ayatollah Khomeini in March 1989. While he was still the heir apparent, the IRI referred to Montazeri with the title of grand ayatollah, but upon his dismissal, Ayatollah Khomeini did not address him with an appropriate title, putting his religious rank in doubt.

After his removal, Montazeri returned to his old occupation of teaching in Qum and avoided politics so long as Khomeini was alive. After Ayatollah Khomeini's death, Montazeri occasionally issued declarations of protest, criticizing IRI policies. It seems that while he was removed as the heir apparent, his position as a *marja'* among many supporters of the IRI as well ordinary people began to grow. At one point, a member of the third Majles suggested that over a hundred members considered Montazeri as their source of imitation.

From 1989 onward, Montazeri actively built up his power base in clerical circles, attracting many students and supporters. While the government attempted to discourage people from accepting him as their *marja'*, he fast became a viable *marja'* with the right credentials. As such, Montazeri soon became a figure around whom the opposition could rally. Occasional government attacks on him, attacks on his home and school, and his periodic house arrest in the 1990s only elevated his position.

Rafsanjani's two-term presidency (1989–97) consisted of two interrelated policies in economic and political spheres. On the economic side, it was one of reconstruction of the country's infrastructure and economy and promotion of limited private entrepreneurial participation. In the political sphere, it was one of continued political repression, albeit on a less severe scale, and there was even less space for political dissent among the ruling elite. Furthermore, and less successfully, attempts were made to normalize the IRI's foreign relations and thus end its international isolation.

Iran after the end of the war was a ravaged country. An estimated one hundred billion dollars worth of damage had been inflicted, while the southwest of the country, center of its oil production and perhaps its most industrialized and richest area, was devastated. Added to this was a high birthrate after the revolution, translating into a population explosion with threatening prospects for economic recovery.

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Under a liberal-minded minister of Islamic guidance, Mohammad Khatami, regulations for publications, filmmaking, arts, and other cultural activities were relaxed, jumpstarting a limited renaissance. Many secular elements in society, as well as many religious people, either in outright opposition or locked out of power, now found the chance to express themselves in the many available periodicals, artistic journals, movies, and other cultural venues. New ideas about civil society, participatory government, reforming the IRI, and democracy began to be expressed, mostly among the educated elite and yet inevitably influencing the public as well.

The period of cultural liberalization also witnessed the reemergence of a vibrant women's rights movement, sometimes called "Islamic feminism." The difference between this phase of the women's rights movement and the one at the beginning of the revolution was twofold. First, the movement's participants were not limited to the educated modern middle class fighting for jobs, the right to dress freely, and maintaining their legal rights. This time around, middle-class secular women were joined by many religious educated women who had supported Khomeini and the revolution. In addition, many women too young to remember the revolution also joined the movement. Second, the combination of these elements created a vibrant and potent force more focused on results and possibilities than on rhetoric. For example, since challenging the forced veil was out of reach at this point, the women's movement concentrated on women's rights in other spheres, such as equal employment and educational opportunity, equality before the law, and more modern, fashion-friendly concepts of the veil.

The intellectual and social stimulation caused by cultural relaxation and public debate of many controversial issues resulted in a challenging movement for more freedom and a rise of public expectation of more participation. The roots of the reform movement of the coming years may partially be traced to this period. Cultural relaxation, however, came to an abrupt end during Rafsanjani's second term (1993–97) after conservative forces objected to it, resulting in Khatami's dismissal in 1992. Although the public arena for expression was not completely shut, Khatami's removal signaled a change of course by the Rafsanjani administration.

Despite attempts at stamping out factionalism, the second Rafsanjani term witnessed the reemergence of factional politics with more intensity and even more potency; this was the genesis of the reform movement soon to erupt in 1997. The Rafsanjani presidency was a period of transformation and redefinition for the left faction. The left, those supporters of the revolution who advocated a policy of increased state intervention in the economy and society, were utterly outmaneuvered after Khomeini's death. After being purged from the parliament, disillusioned and dissatisfied with the course of events, many major figures on the left began to rethink their previous positions and the general course the IRI was taking. In this, the left was supported by technocratic elements from Rafsanjani's camp who believed their policies were stonewalled by the conservative faction. As the presidential election of 1997 approached, many from among what may now be called the former left or reformed left faction, plus some from among the pragmatist supporters of Rafsanjani, began to look for a viable candidate to replace Rafsanjani. Hence

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the May 1997 presidential election that brought Mohammad Khatami to office and opened a period identified with the reform movement should be understood in light of developments of the previous period.

The Fourth Stage (1997–2004)

The IRI has been unique among many Muslim Middle Eastern countries in holding elections for its elected state organs (the presidency and parliament), although candidacy has always been limited to those the state viewed as revolutionary loyalists. The term "loyalist" has been a fluid concept in IRI politics, used to exclude undesirables. At the beginning of the revolution, the undesirables were members of the secular opposition. Then they came to include the Islamic liberals, and by the 1990s the left faction was deemed undesirable. The vetting process in IRI elections gave the Iranian Shi'i theocracy a unique outlook. While the IRI's politics have been far from democratic, they could not be defined as totalitarian either. The uncharted space between broad concepts of democracy and totalitarianism is where the IRI political system has stood since 1979, with various degrees of repression and freedom according to the circumstances.

In 1997, the Rafsanjani administration decided to promote a more open election by encouraging its own supporters in the pragmatist faction and those of the former left to put up a viable candidate to run against the conservative candidate Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, the speaker of the fourth and fifth Majles. While "nonloyalist" candidates were not asked to run, the idea was to have a more real and even vibrant election at a time when the IRI felt it was stable and secure both domestically and internationally. The hope was to increase the regime's legitimacy by allowing real competition between candidates with real differences. No one seems to have imagined the conservative candidate could be defeated, while everyone hoped the opposition could show enough popular support to become a viable loyal opposition in future elections. The candidate picked by the left to lead them in the election was Muhammad Khatami, the former liberal-minded minister who had gained a positive reputation during his tenure and because of his abrupt dismissal.

In a way, Khatami's political career and presidential candidacy encapsulated the transformation the left faction of the IRI went through in the 1990s. Khatami and his supporters, the reform camp as they came to be called, had been ardent supporters of the revolution from the early days. Many, if not all, had impeccable credentials as revolutionaries in support of Khomeini and in defense of the revolution during the war with Iraq. For example, a good number of those students who took part in the taking of American hostages in 1979 now belonged to the reform camp and supported Khatami. As such, the reform camp's transformation was the transformation of a good part of the revolutionary elite that had been running Iran since 1979.

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Khatami's campaign was a brilliant one designed to reach out to the youth and women voters, by far the largest voting blocks. While Nateq, the conservative candidate, refused to show a smile or grant an interview to women's publications, Khatami did both and more. He addressed youth and women, acknowledged their difficulties, admitted to some shortcomings of the IRI, and promised remedies. Khatami's core message was that the IRI ought to let civil society expand, expand individual liberties, make the rule of law a principle, improve the economy, and normalize Iran's foreign relations with as many countries as possible. In short, the reform camp's message was that democracy was possible within the context of the IRI and its constitution, or as Khatami sometimes called it, "Islamic democracy."

The victory of Khatami on May 23, 1997, was overwhelming, as over thirty million Iranians voted, surprising not only the conservatives but also the reformers and their supporters. As if sensing change was in the air and that the new faces and their message were for real, large number of voters showed up and gave Khatami over twenty million votes. Nateq received seven million, and the rest were divided between two minor candidates. In the years to come, many reformers would readily admit that they were not ready for this victory and that popular will in effect put control of the executive branch in their hands. Ready or not, the Second of Khordad Movement (named after the Iranian month in which the elections were held) now faced the challenge of delivering on its promises.

From the early days of Khatami's presidency, it became clear that the task of delivering on his promises was a challenging one, and mistakes made by him and his supporters made the task even more difficult. While still in shock, the conservative faction was nevertheless in charge of the parliament, which was not scheduled for election until 2000, and of course controlled the all-powerful office of *rahbar* through Khamenei. Khatami was able to name most of his ministers, but on some key ministries (e.g., defense and intelligence) he had to compromise. More importantly, he immediately began to issue permits for proreform dailies to be published, resulting in an overnight explosion of newspapers and weeklies with new, upbeat outlooks, eager to take on the task of reporting on reform and the shortcomings of the revolution.

In 1998, the conservative faction began a counterattack. Reformist journalists such as Akbar Ganji and others were partially responsible for strengthening the conservative faction by unleashing relentless attacks on former president Rafsanjani and his tenure. After Khatami's election, Rafsanjani was named head of a constitutional body created in 1989 called the Expediency Council (EC). The function of the EC was to mediate and issue final rulings in disputes between the Majles and the watchdog Guardian Council, which had a veto power over the parliament. Hence, as one of the most powerful men in the IRI in charge of a powerful constitutional body, Rafsanjani was a person who should have been at least neutralized by the reformers if they hoped to advance their agenda. Attacks on Rafsanjani in effect pushed him to make a tactical alliance with the conservative faction, thus strengthening it.

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The conservative faction closely controlled the election for the third Council of Experts held in November 1998, making sure reformers did not gain control. This was followed by the serial killings of a number of prominent political and cultural figures. As a result of Khatami's pressure, it soon became clear that elements from the Intelligence Ministry were the main culprits. While some midlevel operatives were arrested, and one committed suicide, those responsible at the top were never charged. On the positive side, Khatami used the occasion to purge the Intelligence Ministry and turn it into a more professional organ dealing with espionage and counterespionage.

In January 1999, Khatami pushed for and managed to hold nationwide local elections. A constitutional requirement, local elections for city councils and municipalities had never been held in the IRI. Khatami viewed the elections as a step in the empowerment of the people and development of democracy. The elections were another total victory for the reformers, but during the same month Said Hajjarian, a key backer of Khatami and a main architect of the reform movement, was badly wounded in an assassination attempt in Tehran. The culprits were once again associated with the conservative faction and were not punished. From the middle of 1998, the conservative faction began to use the IRI judiciary, a state branch under their control, to attack freedom of the press and put key supporters of Khatami in prison. Hence, while the judiciary remained silent on the serial killings and the Hajjarian assassination, it closed down newspapers and put people in jail for the slightest transgression. The high point of the conservative counterpunch was the summer 1999 repression of student demonstrations in support of the reform program and freedom of expression.

On the international scene, Khatami's policy of improving relations with the West and other countries showed a degree of success. Already since the final days of the Soviet Union, Iran had become a customer for Russian-made weapons and nuclear technology. During Khatami's tenure, relations with Russia, China, and others improved rapidly. Toward the West, Khatami showed a kinder, gentler face of the IRI and proposed a "dialogue of civilizations" in order to bring about a better understanding between the Muslim world and the West, and this was adopted by the UN. In this regard, relations with the EU improved rapidly, allowing more economic and diplomatic interaction between the two sides. Hence, with the exception of Iran-U.S. relations, the Khatami tenure brought a significant partial end to the IRI's international isolation.

Iran's relationship with the United States continued to be one of missed opportunities for improvement. In 2000, the Clinton administration came very close to admitting and even apologizing for the American role in the 1953 coup, setting the stage for an opening between the two countries. But strong forces in both countries (the Republican-dominated Congress in the United States and the conservative faction in the IRI) managed to arrest any progress. Any hope of improvement was subsequently dashed with the election of George W. Bush and the tragedy of September 11, 2001.

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The reform movement found a new lease on life with the parliamentary elections for the sixth Majles held in March–May 2000, which was yet another resounding victory for the reform camp as it came to control the Majles. With the reformers now in control of two out of three state branches, and with Iran's foreign relations normalizing and improving, the stage was seemingly set for delivering on the reform movement's promises. Yet Khatami's remaining first term and his second term (2001–05) witnessed an effective stonewalling of the reform program by the conservative faction. There were several reasons why things developed the way they did.

First, although the conservative faction lost the popular vote at every election, leaving no doubt that it did not have any type of popular mandate, it still received around 7 to 10 percent of the vote. This reality translated into a potent, militant, and violent social base for the conservatives.

Second, the conservative faction, while unable to control any of the popularly elected organs without rigging the elections, has been nevertheless in charge of other, unelected, constitutional institutions. These include the office of *rahbar* through Khamenei, who is the commander in chief of all the armed forces, as well as the IRI judiciary and the Guardian Council. It was through these constitutional state organs that the conservative faction managed to arrest the reform movement even when the reformers controlled the presidency and the parliament.

In this context, the evolution of the Revolutionary Guards became a major factor in the politics of the IRI. The Guards were established in the early days of the revolution to guard its accomplishments. During the war with Iraq, they changed from a militia force with limited capabilities to a battle-tested military force. Ayatollah Khomeini had always warned against the military's interference in politics and had explicitly prohibited it. During Khomeini's time, while the regular armed forces were put in charge of defending the borders of the country, the Guards were put in charge of domestic security.

During the Rafsanjani presidency, the Guards were allowed to become a major player in the reconstruction of the country. Thus, the Guards and affiliated business interests soon became a major business association, with vested interests in Iran's oil and other industries. In this context, and despite Khomeini's warning, the Guards began to play a more direct role in politics, and its upper officer corps began to openly side with the conservatives.

Third, President Khatami and his supporters originally proposed to make further reforms within the existing constitutional legal framework. Khatami never suggested that he was willing or able to move against the IRI's constitutional legality. If anything, he kept insisting that the other side observe this legality as well. But the reformers soon realized that with real power in the hand of the antireform camp, even with reform control over the executive and legislative branches, there was little they could do.

Fourth, if Khatami and his supporters decided to pursue their goal of reforming the system, they had to entertain the possibility of confronting the conservatives by appealing to their popular mandate and backing it by involving the populace. Here, the elitist nature of the reform movement and Khatami's hesitation prevented

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soon became an important and urgent topic of the tenth presidential election. The reform supporters put forward a smart strategy to defeat Ahmadinejad, whose presidency they believed had been a disaster. The reform camp's only hope was that the public agreed with this assessment. This strategy entailed, first, a need to produce a viable candidate besides Mehdi Karrubi, the former speaker of the Majles, the leader of the Etemad Melli Party, and a proreform politician and cleric who had already declared his candidacy. This was because while Karrubi was known as a straight-shooting cleric, he was also known to be a bit eccentric and at times unprincipled. Also, a second attractive candidate would have galvanized the base and helped overcome the public apathy of the 2005 election. In this context, former wartime prime minister Musavi was approached by the reformers to run for election. Musavi had a good reputation as a state manager during the difficult war years. He was known to have been liked by Khomeini, but to have had serious political differences with Khamenei while he was president in the 1980s. After leaving government, Musavi had stayed on the margins and had built up a reputation as an open-minded and tolerant artist and proreform figure who, nevertheless, was reluctant to run for election. Musavi's hesitation, however, was overcome, and he declared his candidacy in spring 2009. To these two openly proreform candidates was added Mohsen Rezaie, a pro-Rafsanjani former Guards commander and EC member. Rezaie presented himself as the candidate of the right, hoping to reduce the appeal of Ahmadinejad among more traditional voters.

The election campaign of May–June 2009 proved to be electrifying, as many voters rallied to campaign gatherings where the color green, associated with Musavi's campaign, became a symbol of demand for change. The three candidates in effect concentrated on attacking President Ahmadinejad's record while avoiding attacks on each other. The tenth presidential election showed that the reform camp had managed to resolve its differences with the pragmatic supporters of Rafsanjani and put forward a campaign designed to bring the maximum number of voters to the polls in order to recreate a landslide victory similar to Khatami's in 1997.

What the reform camp, and almost all other observers, failed to realize was the strength of the vested interests in support of President Ahmadinejad and the lengths to which they would be willing to go to prevent his removal from office. Circumstantial evidence points to the rigging of the election by the government, with a hasty declaration of Ahmadinejad as the winner. Here it became apparent that those who rigged the election had miscalculated the public mood, as the announcement of the election results prompted spontaneous demonstrations against Ahmadinejad and in support of Musavi. Mass demonstrations in Tehran and other major cities faced by repression by the security forces. It became clear that the Revolutionary Guards and the militia force under its command, the Basij, would go to any length to suppress the opposition. After the arrest of hundreds of people and the death of close to a hundred, the leaderless demonstrations, which also lacked coherent organization, began to fade away.

But the election of June 2009 caused a deep division within the ruling elite of the IRI. On one side stand the "victors" of the election, who have seemingly managed to

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Éléments sous droits d'auteur

Ruling Dynasties of Iran

The relationship of each ruler to the previous one is noted in brackets.

Ancient Iranian Dynasties

Elam (3000–530 BCE)

1) Puzur-Inshushinak (circa 2100 BCE)
2) Kindattu (circa 2000–1900 BCE)
3) Kidinuids (1500–1400 BCE)
4) Igihalkids (1400–1200 BCE)
5) Shutrukids (1200–1100 BCE)

Medes (694–665 BCE)

1) Deioces (694–665 BCE)
2) Phraortes (665–633 BCE) [son]
3) Cyaxares (625–585 BCE) [son]
4) Astyages (585–550 BCE) [son]

Achaemenid Dynasty

1) Cyrus II the Great (559–530 BCE) [fourth in descent from Achaemenes]
2) Cambyses II (530–522 BCE) [son]
3) Bardiya (522 BCE) [son of #1]
4) Darius I (550–486 BCE) [fifth in descent from Achaemenes]
5) Xerxes I (485–465 BCE) [son]
6) Artaxerxes I (465–424 BCE) [son]
7) Xerxes II (424 BCE) [son]
8) Sogdianus (424–423 BCE) [son of #6]
9) Darius II (423–404 BCE) [son of #6]
10) Artaxerxes II (404–358 BCE) [son]
11) Artaxerxes III (358–338 BCE) [son]
12) Artaxerxes IV (338–336 BCE) [son]
13) Darius III (336–330 BCE) [grandson of #9]

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Macedonians (330–301 BCE)

1) Alexander the Great (330–323 BCE)
2) Antigonus Monophthalmus (306–301 BCE) [one of Alexander's commanders]

Seleucids (305–146 BCE)

1) Seleucus I (305–281 BCE) [one of Alexander's commanders]
2) Antiochus I Soter (292–261 BCE) [son]
3) Antiochus II Theos (261–246 BCE) [son]
4) Seleucus II Callinicus (246–225 BCE) [son]
5) Seleucus III Soter (225–223 BCE) [son]
6) Antiochus III the Great (223–187 BCE) [son of #4]
7) Seleucus IV Philopator (187–175 BCE) [son]
8) Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BCE) [son of #6]
9) Antiochus V Eupator (164–162 BCE) [son]
10) Demetrius I (162–150 BCE) [son of #7]
11) Alexander Balas (150–146 BCE) [son of #8]

Arsacids/Parthians (247 BCE–224 CE)

1) Arsaces I (247–211 BCE)
2) Arsaces II (211–191 BCE) [son]
3) Phriapatius (191–176 BCE) [cousin?]
4) Phraates I (176–171 BCE) [son]
5) Mithradates I (171–138 BCE) [brother]
6) Phraates II (138–127 BCE) [son]
7) Artabanus I (127–124 BCE) [son of #3]
8) Mithradates II (123–88 BCE) [son]
9) Gotarzes I (95–90 BCE) [grandson of #3]
10) Orodes I (90–80 BCE) [brother?]
11) Sinatruces (77–70 BCE) [son of #3?]
12) Phraates III (70–57 BCE) [son]
13) Mithradates III (57–54 BCE) [son]
14) Orodes II (57–38 BCE) [brother]
15) Phraates IV (38 BCE–2 CE) [brother]
16) Phraates V (2–4 CE) [son]
17) Orodes III (6 CE) [son?]
18) Vonones I (8–12 CE) [son of #16]
19) Artabanus II (10–38 CE) [?]
20) Tirdates II (35–36 CE) [grandson of #16]
21) Vardanes I (40–47 CE) [son of #20]
22) Gotarzes II (40–51 CE) [brother]
23) Vonones II (51 CE) [son of #22]
24) Vardanes II (54–58 CE) [son?]
25) Vologases I (51–78 CE) [son of #24]
26) Vologases II (77–80 CE) [son]
27) Pacorus I (78–105 CE) [brother?]
28) Artabanus III (80–90 CE) [?]
29) Khosrow I (109–129 CE) [?]
30) Vologases III (105–147 CE) [?]
31) Mithradates IV (129–140 CE) [brother?]

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32) Vologases IV (147–191 CE) [son]
33) Vologases V (191–208 CE) [son?]
34) Vologases VI (208–228 CE) [son]
35) Artabanus IV (216–224 CE) [brother]

Sasanians (224–651 CE)

1) Ardashir I (224–240 CE) [grandson of Sasan]
2) Shapur I (240–270 CE) [son]
3) Hormizd I (270–271 CE) [son]
4) Bahram (Wahram) I (271–274 CE) [brother]
5) Bahram II (274–293 CE) [son]
6) Bahram III (293 CE) [son]
7) Narseh (293–302 CE) [son of #2]
8) Hormizd II (302–309 CE) [son]
9) Adurnarse (309 CE) [son]
10) Shapur II (309–379 CE) [brother]
11) Ardashir II (279–283 CE) [brother]
12) Shapur III (383–388 CE) [son of #10]
13) Bahram IV (388–399 CE) [brother]
14) Yazdgerd I (399–420 CE) [son of #12]
15) Bahram V (Gur) (420–438 CE) [son]
16) Yazdgerd II (438–457 CE) [son]
17) Hormizd III (457–459 CE) [son]
18) Piruz (Peroz) (459–484 CE) [brother]
19) Balash (Walash) (488–488 CE) [brother]
20) Kavad (Kawad) I (488–496/498–531 CE) [son of #18]
21) Jamasp (Zamasp) (496–498 CE) [brother]
22) Khosrow I (Anushirvan) (531–579 CE) [son of #20]
23) Hormizd IV (579–590 CE) [son]
24) Bahram VI Chubin (590–591 CE) [usurper]
25) Wistahm (usurper) (591 CE) [maternal uncle of #26]
26) Khosrow II (Aparviz) (591–628 CE) [son of #23]
27) Kavad II (Shiroe) (628 CE) [son]
28) Ardashir III (628–629 CE) [son]
29) Shahrbaraz (629 CE) [usurper]
30) Boran (Buran, Puran) (630–631 CE) [daughter of #26]
31) Azarmidokht (632 CE) [sister]
32) Yazdgerd III (632–651 CE) [grandson of #26]

Dynasties Of Medieval Iran

Umayyad Caliphate (661–750 CE)

1) Muʿawiya I (661–680 CE) [third in descent from Umayya, the eponymous founder of the line]
2) Yazid I (680–683 CE) [son]
3) Muʿawiya II (683–684 CE) [son]
4) Marwan I (684–685 CE) [third in descent from Umayya]

Material com direitos autorais

5) Abd al-Malik I (685–705 CE) [son]
6) Al-Walid I (705–715 CE) [son]
7) Sulaiman (715–717 CE) [brother]
8) Umar II (717–720 CE) [son of #4]
9) Yazid II (720–724 CE) [son of #5]
10) Hisham I (724–743 CE) [brother]
11) Al-Walid II (743–744 CE) [son of #9]
12) Yazid III (744 CE) [son of #6]
13) Ibrahim (744 CE) [brother]
14) Marwan II (744–750 CE) [grandson of #4]

Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258 CE)

1) Al-Saffah, Abdullah (750–754 CE) [fourth in descent from Abbas, uncle of Muhammad]
2) Al-Mansur, Abdullah (754–775 CE) [brother]
3) Al-Mahdi, Muhammad (775–785 CE) [son]
4) Al-Hadi, Musa (785–786 CE) [son]
5) Al-Rashid, Harun (786–809 CE) [brother]
6) Al-Amin, Muhammad (809–813 CE) [son]
7) Al-Ma'mun, Abdullah (813–833 CE) [brother]
8) Al-Mu'tasim, Abbas (833–842 CE) [brother]
9) Al-Wathiq, Harun (842–847 CE) [son]
10) Al-Mutawakkil, Jafar (847–861 CE) [brother]
11) Al-Muntasir, Muhammad (861–862 CE) [son]
12) Al-Musta'in, Ahmad (862–866 CE) [grandson of #8]
13) Al-Mu'tazz, Muhammad (866–869 CE) [son of #10]
14) Al-Muhtadi, Muhammad (869–870 CE) [son of #9]
15) Al-Mu'tamid, Ahmad (870–892 CE) [son of #10]
16) Al-Mu'tadid, Ahmad (892–902 CE) [grandson of #10]
17) Al-Muktafi, Ali (902–908 CE) [son]
18) Al-Muqtadir, Jafar (908–932 CE) [brother]
19) Al-Qahir, Muhammad (932–934 CE) [brother]
20) Al-Radi, Ahmad (934–940 CE) [son of #18]
21) Al-Muttaqi, Ibrahim (940–944 CE) [brother]
22) Al-Mustakfi, Abdullah (944–946 CE) [son of #17]
23) Al-Muti, al-Fadl (946–974 CE) [son of #18]
24) Al-Ta'i, Abdulkarim (974–991 CE) [son]
25) Al-Qadir, Ahmad (991–1031 CE) [grandson of #18]
26) Al-Qa'im (1031–1075 CE) [son]
27) Al-Muqtadi, Abdullah (1075–1094 CE) [grandson]
28) Al-Mustazhir, Ahmad (1094–1118 CE) [son]
29) Al-Mustarshid, al-Fadl (1118–1135 CE) [son]
30) Al-Rashid, Mansur (1135–1136 CE) [son]
31) Al-Muqtafi, Muhammad (1136–1160 CE) [son of #28]
32) Al-Mustanjid, Yusuf (1160–1170 CE) [son]
33) Al-Mustadi, Hasan (1170–1180 CE) [son]
34) Al-Nasir, Ahmad (1180–1225 CE) [son]
35) Al-Zahir, Muhammad (1225–1226 CE) [son]
36) Al-Mustansir, Mansur (1226–1242 CE) [son]
37) Al-Musta'sim, Abdullah (1242–1258 CE) [son]

Material com direitos autorais

Mongols/Ilkhanids (1256–1336 CE)

1) Hülegü Khan (1256–1265 CE) [grandson of Chinggis Khan]
2) Abaqa Khan (1265–1282 CE) [son]
3) Ahmad Tegüder (1282–1284 CE) [seventh son of Hülegü]
4) Arghun (1284–1291 CE) [son of Abaqa]
5) Gaykhatu (1291–1295 CE) [son of Abaqa]
6) Baydu (1295 CE) [grandson of Hülegü via father Taragay]
7) Ghazan (1295–1304 CE) [son of Arghun]
8) Öljeitü Khodabandeh (1304–1317 CE) [son]
9) Abu Sa'id Bahadur (1317–1335 CE) [son]
10) Arpa Khan (1335–1336 CE) [descendant of Hülegü's father, Tolui]

Iran disunited (1336–)

Timurids (1370–1506 CE)

1) Timur (Tamerlane) (1370–1405 CE)
2) Pir Muhammad (1405? CE) [grandson of Timur]
3) Shah Rukh (1405–1447 CE) [son of Timur]
4) Khalil Sultan (1405–1409 CE) [grandson of Timur through Miranshah]
5) Ulugh-Beg (1447–1449 CE) [son of Shah Rukh]
6) Abd-al-Latif Mirza (1449–1450 CE) [son of Ulugh-Beg]
7) Abu Said (1451–1469 CE) [nephew of Khalil Sultan]
8) Husayn Bayqara (1469–1506 CE)

Qara Qoyunlu (Black Sheep) (1380–1468 CE)

1) Qara Muhammad (1380–1389 CE)
2) Qara Yusuf (1389–1420 CE)
3) Some fragmentation
4) Jahan Shah (before 1440s?–1467 CE)

Aq Qoyunlu (White Sheep) (1378–1508 CE)

1) Qara Osman (Uthman) (1403–1435 CE)
2) Eleven different claimants in this twenty-two-year period
3) Uzun Hasan (1457–1478 CE)
4) Civil war
5) Ya'qub (1481–1490 CE)
6) Civil war
7) Rustam (1494–1497 CE)
8) Tripartite division before defeat by Safavids:

   Alwand Aq-Qoyunlu (1497–1501 CE)
   Murad (died 1514)
   Third ruler?

Safavids (1501–1722 CE)

1) Isma'il I (1501–1524 CE)
2) Tahmasp I (1524–1576 CE) [son]
3) Isma'il II (1576–1578 CE) [son]
4) Mohammad Khodabandeh (1578–1587 CE) [son of Tahmasp I]

Material com direitos autorais

5) Abbas I (1587–1629 CE) [son]
6) Safi I (1629–1642 CE) [grandson]
7) Abbas II (1642–1666 CE) [son]
8) Sulayman (Safi II) (1667–1694 CE) [?]
9) Soltan Hosein (1688–1726 CE) [son of Sulayman], *Afghan invasion in 1722*
10) Tahmasp II (1729–1732 CE; pretender) [son]

Afsharids (1736–1796 CE)

1) Nader Shah (1736–1747 CE)
2) Adel Shah (1747–1748 CE) [nephew]
3) Ibrahim Shah (1748–1749 CE) [brother]
4) Shahrukh Shah (1748–1796 CE) [grandson of Nadir Shah]
5) Sulayman II (1750 CE) [grandson of Shah Soltan Hosein]

Zands (1750–1794 CE)

1) Karim Khan Zand (Wakil) (1751–1779 CE)
2) Abol Fath Khan (1779 CE) [son]
3) Sadiq Khan (1780–1782 CE) [brother of Karim Khan]
4) Ali-Morad Khan (1781/2–1785 CE) [nephew of Zaki?]
5) Ja'far (1785–1789 CE) [son of Sadiq Khan?]
6) Lotf Ali (1789–1794 CE) [son of Ja'far]

Modern Iran

Qajars (1789–1925 CE)

1) Agha Mohammad Khan (1789–1797 CE)
2) Fath Ali Shah (1797–1834 CE) [nephew]
3) Mohammad Shah (1834–1848 CE) [grandson]
4) Naser al-Din (1848–1896 CE) [son]
5) Mozaffar al-Din Shah (1896–1907 CE) [son]
6) Mohammad Ali Shah (1903–1909 CE) [son]
7) Ahmad Shah (1909–1925 CE) [son]

Pahlavis (1925–1979 CE)

1) Reza Shah (1926–1941 CE)
2) Mohammad Reza Shah (1941–1979 CE) [son]

Islamic Republic of Iran (from 1979 CE)

1) Ayatollah Khomeini (1979–1989 CE)
2) Ayatollah Khamenei (1989–)

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